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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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THE CRISIS OF MAN AND ENVIRONMENT

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 15 Number 9

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Editorial Comments

IN OUR April 1971 issue we carried an article on the Sudan which drew attention to the dangerous anti-Communist trend already showing itself in the policy of the group around Nimeiry. As the article by Joan Shaw pointed out, this was an expression of the striving on the part of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces associated with the Nimeiry group of officers to maintain their own class domination and to hold in check the Sudanese working class and peasants.

Hence the Government's refusal to legalise the Communist Party of the Sudan after the May 1969 revolution. Hence, too, the attempt to force the Communist Party to dissolve itself within a single party which would be an amalgam of diverse class forces, without a consistent socialist ideology, and dominated by the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The decision of the Communist Party of the Sudan to oppose such propositions was not only a defence of Communist principle, it was a stand which was in the interests of the national liberation movement in the Sudan, and indeed of all the Arab countries, as well as being necessary for the socialist tomorrow.

Since then there has been the temporary overthrow of the Nimeiry Government, in order to return to the path proclaimed in May 1969—and then the counter-coup which, with important support from Libya and the United Arab Republic, restored Nimeiry to power and opened the doors to a new wave of terror.

The Sudanese Communist Party is one of the most outstanding parties in the international movement. It has deep roots among the workers, peasants, students, women, professional people and the youth. It has suffered heavy losses in recent weeks, including its general secretary, Abdel Khalig Mahgoub, the general secretary of the Trade Union Federation, Shafie Ahmed Shaikh, and Joseph Garang, the Minister for Southern Affairs.

Despite the loss of a number of its outstanding leaders, the Sudanese Communist Party still lives. And fights. On August 4, the Lebanese Communist paper, *Al Nida,* reported that the Sudanese Communist Party had issued an appeal which was circulating in Khartoum in the midst of the terror. The appeal declared that the Central Committee of the Party was continuing to function and that it would continue to direct the work of the Party "despite the reign of terror and despite the massacres."

Hundreds are still under arrest and await summary trial. Many leaders are still being hunted. As the Communist Party of Great Britain stated, in its Political Committee declaration of, July 28: "Their lives can be saved. They must be saved."

The international protest movement, in which scores of British trade union leaders were prominent, has helped to stop further executions for the moment—but any let-up in the campaign could endanger the lives of those still under arrest.

Protests should still be sent to the Sudanese Embassy in London, or direct to Khartoum.

ALLENDE'S PATIENCE

Reading Regis Debray's recently published *Conversations with Allende,*[1] one cannot but feel that Chile's new socialist President is not only a fine revolutionary in theory and practice, but a man of remarkable revolutionary patience. Debray is at times like the typical television interviewer who feels that the man he is really interviewing is—himself. He is *telling* Allende, interrupting, condescending, trying to teach his grandmother to suck revolutionary eggs.

Allende unperturbed pursues his patient exposition, endeavouring to deepen Debray's understanding and to penetrate his mind when it seems half-closed.

"My view", says Debray at one point in the interview "is that if there is no confrontation, there will inevitably be treason. Do you think that there will be confrontation"?.

Allende refuses to accept "confrontation" as a sort of instant open sesame to revolution:

[1] Regis Debray—*Conversations with Allende: Socialism in Chile*, NLB, £1.05.

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Allende: Confrontation is already an everyday fact of life, Regis—on all sides, in many different forms.

Debray: I was referring to a head-on decisive confrontation, a violent end to the current state of co-existence. A military uprising for example . . .

Allende: That will depend on them. If they start it, it will happen, but, in any case, we shall wait for them to start it. We are vigilant. But we are not mechanistic. The history of Chile has been punctuated by confrontations for many years. You must know the long list of massacres of workers and peasants under bourgeois rule. What does one understand by confrontations? As long as there are confrontations in society, and these remain even while we are building socialism, confrontations will occur. . . .

Debray seems to want a fixed formula for advance to socialism, a sort of revolutionary philosopher's stone. Allende wants to blend the essential lessons of Marxist-Leninist theory and of international revolutionary experience with the forms of revolution that arise in a particular country with a particular relation of class forces, a particular history, and as part of a given world at a given time.

BOTH ROADS ARE CORRECT

Allende: The lesson is that each country has its own particular circumstances, and it is in the light of those circumstances that one must act. There is no set formula. Our case, for example, opens up possibilities, it shows a way. We have arrived through the polling booths. Apparently it can be said of us that we are mere reformers, but we have taken measures which imply we want to bring about the revolution, that is to transform society, and that in turn means building the socialist society.

Debray: You know how in the overall picture of Latin America your image is being used as a counter-balance to those of Fidel and Ché. What do you think of those who say that what has happened in Chile gives the lie to the thesis of the people's war, to the validity of the armed struggle, shall we say, everywhere?

Allende: I said it just before our victory. The revolutionary struggle may be found in the guerrilla *foco* or in urban insurrection; it may be the people's war and it may be an insurgence through the polling booths; it depends on the content it is given. In some countries there is no alternative to the armed struggle. . . .

As the interview proceeds one asks oneself sometimes is Debray listening to himself or to Allende? He seems, though young, to have adopted a fixed framework of revolution, any disturbance of which is upsetting. The foreign visitor to present-day Chile, he writes in his Preface, has "to grasp an ungraspable situation". In terms of (Debray's idea of) Marxism-Leninism, "it becomes, incomprehensible, irritating, even disturbing".

It should *not* be happening! It *is* happening! Oh dear!

Yet, to do him justice, he is trying to come to grips with this "incomprehensible" reality. He acknowledges (p.23) that for imperialism, and United States imperialism especially, "Chile has become the main enemy of the moment". In his own words (p.44) he admits the necessity for a revolutionary of certain types of compromise and refuses to share "the opinion of those who think it is unworthy of a revolutionary to take part in elections and even suspicious that he should win them, whatever the circumstances and the country".

But he does not seem really to understand Che Guevara's inscription on a copy of his *The Guerrilla War* which he dedicated to Allende—"To Salvador Allende, who is trying to obtain the same result by other means", nor the warmth of Fidel Castro's reception for the victory of the Chilean Popular Unity nor the essential fact that *both* Cuba and Chile can be taking the correct socialist road.

The publishers have seen fit to conclude this small book with a long extract from a statement of MIR (The *Left Movement of Revolution*) deeply critical of the whole strategy of the Chilean Socialist and Communist Parties and of Popular Unity as a whole, from a leftist viewpoint.

Why they have done so is somewhat obscure. Especially if Debray is correct when he writes that Chile has become the main enemy of American imperialism, and if American imperialism's main hope for the moment is not, as it would seem, direct intervention but a provocation from within which would be the more useful to imperialism the more it came or seemed to come from the hands of the left.

It has become fashionable of late for bourgeois publishers to put out works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other revolutionaries with long prefaces or profuse notes, to warn the reader not to believe the Marxist writings which they are publishing. The writings however are likely to influence the reader far more than their traducers or introducers, and we are sure that the wisdom of Allende's words will penetrate to the reader through the surrounding fog at either end.

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THE IRISH REVOLUTION

Lawrence and Wishart's recent publication, *Liam Mellows and Irish Revolution* by C. Desmond Greaves, is a book of major importance for the British as well as the Irish people.[2] It tells the story of the epic years 1919-1922 in Ireland, and is the first that explains why events then took the course they did and why they were of vital importance to the British people. It is especially topical today, when Northern Ireland reels in the turmoil of seemingly endless crisis.

Desmond Greaves understands the Irish Revolution in terms of the conflicts of class interests, and tells its story through the life of one of the greatest revolutionaries of the period. Liam Mellows was among the foremost leaders of the Republican cause whose objects were "to secure for the Irish people control of their own destinies so that they could solve their social and economic problems themselves". Enlisting in *Na Fianna Eireann* in 1911, his whole short life thereafter was that of a soldier of Ireland. He was organiser of the armed rising in Galway supporting the Easter Rising of 1916, and afterwards the chief organiser of clandestine arms supplies for the I.R.A. Repudiating the terms of the Treaty of 1921, he was a leader of the defence of the Republican-held Four Courts in Dublin against the pro-Treaty forces in 1922, and was taken prisoner after the capitulation of the garrison. He was shot, together with three other prisoners, as a reprisal, on December 8, 1922.

More than any other of the men who followed James Connolly, Mellows in his understanding of the Revolution embodied Connolly's principle that the propertied classes always betrayed the struggle for Irish independence and that only the working class remained the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for Irish freedom.

This book has already been widely hailed in Ireland. The *Irish Press* wrote that "Mr. Greaves has put the country in his debt"; the *United Irishman* that it is "essential reading for Republicans"; while the *Irish Times,* describing it as "carefully written and superbly researched", said that it "has contributed greatly to clearing away the mists that cover so much of our history".

"People of all opinions in this country, and political activists in particular, should read this book," the *Irish Times* concluded. And that applies equally to people in England, Scotland and Wales, for whom the struggles of the people of Ireland must always remain of burning concern.

[2] *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution,* by C. Desmond Greaves. Lawrence and Wishart, 416 pp., £4.

"COMMUNIST CONSPIRACIES"

Lawrence and Wishart will shortly publish two books that will make very good reading for anyone interested in the development of communism and the proletarian revolutionary movement in Europe.

One is a full-scale study of the life and ideas of the great revolutionary Auguste Blanqui, written by the American Marxist scholar Samuel Bernstein.[3] Blanqui was the supreme exponent of the secret society and the revolutionary conspiracy, and his activities spanned the whole period from the restoration of the Bourbons in France to the Paris Commune. Dr. Bernstein has written a brilliant and extremely readable biography of Blanqui, a penetrating analysis of the revolutionary developments in France through the 1830 and 1848 revolutions and the Second Empire up to the Paris Commune, and an enlightening account of Blanqui's socialist theories and policies which explains their contemporary impact and their relationship with Marxism. Most of us have heard tell of Blanquism—here is the opportunity to learn exactly what it was all about.

The other book contains an English translation, together with a very informative introduction by Rodney Livingstone, of Marx's and Engels' writings on the great trial of eleven members of the Communist League in Cologne in 1852.[4] This was the first big show trial of Communists ever to be staged, and was carried through by the Prussian Government complete with forged evidence and scare stories of horrifying conspiracies. The two major writings by Marx and Engels translated here are very different in character. In *Revelations concerning the Communist Trial in Cologne* Marx, writing while the trial was in progress, enters a spirited defence of the arrested Communists. In *Heroes of the Exile* he and Engels make an equally spirited attack on the romantic posturings in emigration of some of the exiles of the 1848 revolution, who thought that a new revolution was just round the corner.

[3] *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection,* by Samuel Bernstein. Lawrence and Wishart, 368 pp., £4.

[4] *The Cologne Communist Trial,* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, translated by Rodney Livingstone. Lawrence and Wishart, 298 pp., £3.

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TURNOUT FOR THE CHARTER

Little detailed attention has been paid by the historians of Chartism to what Engels called "the universal turnout for the Charter and higher wages", at Manchester and elsewhere, in 1842. And yet it was the real turning-point in the Chartist movement, more so than the rejection by Parliament of the second Chartist petition that year which is usually given most prominence. Strikes of miners, pottery workers and others against wage cuts, which began in Staffordshire in May that year, spread by August into Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Lancashire and West Yorkshire, rapidly becoming a general strike in these areas. Miners, ironworkers, textile workers of all sections, bricklayers, carpenters and other trades struck.

Although worker-Chartists played an active part from the beginning, the Charter was not at first part of the workers' demands: "fair day's wages for fair day's work", the 8-hour day and an end to the truck system was the initial programme adopted by strikers' meetings. But very soon the demand for the Charter as well made its appearance, in response to the workers' discovery that the Government was sending regular infantry and cavalry units to support the police against them. Vast marches, thousands strong, from town to town: workers leaving the factories in mass as the columns arrived in their town: great meetings with tens of thousands of participants: clashes with the police, shooting by the troops, volleys of stones by the workers, a number killed and wounded: the setting up at Stalybridge and Dukinfield of "committees of operatives" which issued licences to factory managers to resume work: the holding of a "great conference" of strike delegates at Manchester on 15th and 16th August, calling—before it was dispersed by the police—for the workers all over the country to join in the strike for the Charter (and members of other classes as well) —these were the events that developed over a vast industrial region, from Bradford, Huddersfield and Sheffield to all Lancashire, Cheshire and the West Midlands, while strikes raged in Scotland and South Wales.

This is the subject of a new work, *The First Class Battle of the Proletariat: England 1842*, by a young Soviet historian, Alexander Reznikov, of the Institute of the International Labour Movement (*Science* Publishers, Moscow, 1970, 310 pages). The Institute is a comparatively new research foundation of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Reznikov's book is based on a thorough study of official reports and other printed sources. A valuable feature of his work is that he never forgets the political and theoretical implications of his research: it is fitted into the general picture of workers' conditions at the time, and of the development of the Chartist organisation and propaganda. Another is his critical survey of previous writings on the subject, from a booklet of the Chartists Leach, West and White in 1849 to the study by F. C. Mather in 1965. A translation into English would be a very worth-while contribution to the British people's knowledge of their own history.

MERLIN PRESS

We asked the manager of Merlin Press,[5] which has pioneered the publication in this country of the English translations of the works of Lukacs, what books were pending over the months ahead.

He told us that Lukacs' *Theory of the Novel* will be ready soon, to be followed early in 1972 by his *Studies in European Realism*, which was the first Lukacs book to appear in English (1950).

Amongst other works under preparation is one by Paul Mattick on *Marx and Keynes: the Limits of the Mixed Economy* and William Warbey's *Ho Chi Minh and the Struggle for an Independent Vietnam*, the last chapter of which is just being completed. A paperback edition of Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory* should be ready very soon.

Ralph Miliband is working on a new edition of his *Parliamentary Socialism*, though no publication date has yet been fixed. The author is adding a long analytical essay discussing the Labour Party as an agency of socialist change.

Membership of the Merlin Book Club (at the cost of £3.50) entitles the subscriber to three books from a list which includes the *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness* edited by Istvan Meszaros, as well as his study of *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, the *Socialist Register 1971*, Royden Harrison's *English Defence of the Commune*, Gammage's *History of the Chartist Movement*, a number of works by Lukacs and other titles. Additional books from this list can be purchased by members at £1 each.

[5] 11 Fitzroy Square, London. W.1.

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The Crisis of Man and Environment[1]

Richard Hayter and John Cox

"I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude that the members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum for world development efforts.

If a global partnership is not forged within the next decade then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control."

(U Thant: May 9., 1969)

Whether or not we accept U Thant's estimate, the fact that such a view could be expressed, with the authority of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, marks the present age as unique, so far as the relationship between mankind, resources and environment is concerned. At no previous period in history would such a formulation have been possible. Never before could evidence have been assembled on a world-wide scale pointing to the conclusion that the scope and nature of man's impact on the environment is approaching a point where he could cut from under his own feet the very basis of his continued existence. Yet such evidence grows in volume daily.

Pre-occupied with the daily prosecution of the intensifying class struggle, and possibly somewhat dazzled by the spectacular successes of Socialist industrialisation in the USSR, it is perhaps understandable that many Marxists have tended to dismiss the warnings, which have been increasingly sounded, as mere neo-Malthusian belly-aching, and to concern themselves only with such obvious environmental matters as slum clearance and re-housing. The rising tide of public concern about the many symptoms of deepening environmental crisis, and the need to take up a position on a growing number of difficult environmental issues, make urgent a closer examination of the whole problem.

Neo-Malthusian Bogey

The neo-Malthusian bogey was dealt with in this Journal by Ivor Montagu in June 1966, but it has evidently not been finally laid and still requires attention. The essence of Malthus' position was that human population must always outrun food supply because the latter increases by arithmetical progression, (adding a quantity to a quantity), and the former by geometric progression, (each increase itself breeding a further increase). Marx's reply was that the cause of starvation and want was not the inadequacy of resources, but the incapacity of capitalism to produce and distribute in a rational way. Of course he was perfectly correct. There was no global shortage of resources in his day. He did not, however, say that there never would be, and Engels actually wrote of the possibility of communist society needing to "regulate the production of people just as, by that time, it regulates the production of things", and stated that it would be fully capable of doing so. This, and no blind faith, is the proper basis of Marxist optimism; whereas Malthus' notorious pessimism stems from his inability to conceive of a society capable of such "regulation", or planning. Marx would be startled indeed to learn that his trouncing of Malthus was being used to discredit the conclusions of ecology and of scientific resource assessment.

The Imbalances

In fact, what is being said by conservationists today, and what clearly forms the basis of U Thant's warning quoted above, is not the same at all as what Malthus was saying. Malthus did not assess the capacity of resources. He saw things as a race between food *production* and population growth, in which the former was fated to be the loser. But conservationists today are adducing

[1] The Science and Technology sub-committee of the Communist Party has recently held several discussions on Pollution and Environmental problems. A number of specific proposals on immediate measures were agreed by the Communist Party Executive Committee and submitted to the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. Richard Hayter and John Cox were asked to prepare this article dealing with the wider theoretical questions of the current discussion. The article does not present the views of the sub-committee as such but it is hoped that a definitive standpoint on some of the questions can be made as a result of the response to this article.

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evidence that the non-renewable resources of the world are approaching exhaustion and the renewable resources (briefly, those which *grow*) are being impaired by over-use and pollution and that the time for regulation is now.

So far from this being a matter of no concern to Marxists, it is one which they are uniquely qualified to understand. For Marxism does not begin as a man-centred political philosophy. It begins as a way of looking at the world and nature as a whole. The evolution of man and of human society, though all-important to us, are not seen as independent phenomena, but as taking place within, and as part of, the ever-developing system of nature. Since the environmental crisis which confronts us today is one of imbalances within the whole of nature on this planet, it may be helpful to attempt a brief outline of the development of these imbalances from their early beginnings up to the present critical stage.

Since we are concerned here with things that have gone wrong, the emphasis will of course, in this outline, not be on the positive achievements of human developments, though these are not denied. It had better, therefore, be said in advance that, though the unplanned and uncontrolled application of science and technology may appear here as the principal villain of the piece, their planned and controlled use offers the only possible means of reversing the damage done and launching the world on a new fruitful phase of development.

Let us attempt the outline.

Historical Development of Environmental Crisis

If we could have looked at this planet as it was fifty thousand years ago, there would have seemed no reason why it should not have continued to sustain an ever-developing pattern of life, until the exhaustion of the sun removes the conditions necessary for the support of living organisms.

Fifty thousand years ago the natural life system which operated was self-balancing and self-perpetuating. Decomposition balanced growth. The system disposed of its own wastes, which is another way of saying that it recycled its own raw materials. As surely as some species, through failure to adapt to changing conditions, passed out of existence, so did others develop. All species were interlocked in this developing process and were interdependent. None dominated.

About ten thousand years ago one species, mankind, began to find exceptional ways of manipulating the system and so causing it to support more humans, and at a higher living standard than before. Having once set out on this path, man continued to increase the impact of his own species, relative to the whole system, until he began to make serious alterations in it, and reduced the capacity of many areas to support life. Notably, by the spread of pastoralism, the use of fire and of the axe, he destroyed great quantities of natural vegetation and degraded to desert and to bare rock much once fertile land, particularly in the Middle East.

Capitalism and the Imbalance

The development of class-divided societies caused a great increase in the unbalancing of the natural system. For *nature is the source of all the raw materials and resources from which wealth is created* and the need of the property-owning classes to increase their wealth caused them to compete in the using up of these resources and the exploitation of the labour of the dispossessed classes helped them to do this more rapidly. We can discern here a tendency for those civilisations which achieved a lasting ecological balance with their environments to fall victim to those which, having comparatively failed in this respect, were driven the harder to rely on military expansion. One may instance the peaceful and highly conservation-conscious Incas of Peru who were so brutally destroyed by the Spanish Conquistadors.

As capitalism took over, the process of unbalancing began to reach its culmination. The aim of production was no longer the satisfaction of human need, but the making of cash profit. It did not matter what was produced or how, only that it should make the maximum profit. Division of labour became intensified. People became expert specialists in particular spheres of production. Each enterprise solved its own problems of producing in the most profitable way, without regard to any other consequences. The "oneness" of nature was hidden from people; and so was the fact that the human species depends, as much as any other, on the properly balanced working of the whole system of nature. This anarchy of capitalist production was and is a disaster not only for the working people, but for the whole of nature.

Now came the industrial and technological revolutions, coupled with many outstanding successes in specialised scientific fields, notably in medicine. Through the medical control of death, without counter-balancing control of the number of births, the human population began to explode numerically. The weight of human numbers, increasing as it is at an ever-accelerating speed, together with the competitive operation of the profit motive, strains and distorts even further the natural life system, induces intensification of farming methods, together with increased monocropping, mass use of pesticides and stimulation of the soil by artificial fertilisers. In the short term this produces some results in higher yield. In the long term, when carried to excess, it leads to

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pollution of water from farm effluents and chemicals, increase of "pests" and diseases, extermination of many wild species of flora and fauna, deterioration of the soil structure, in short, to general reduction of biological productivity and weakening of the natural life system.

All the time, owing to the growing need of the exploding populations for housing, factories, shops, roads etc., less and less soil is left to produce more and more food, and less and less space is left for the rest of nature.

The Example of Transport

It is worth looking a little more closely at one or two examples of this anarchy of capitalist production in Britain. Transport is perhaps the most striking. Within about the last century and a half we have seen the inland water-way system largely bought out by the Railway Companies and allowed to lapse into disuse, in order to eliminate competition. After a brief period of supremacy, the Railways had to give way before the pressure of the Motor, and particularly the oil monopolies. This time a Tory Government appointed the executioner in the person of Beeching, and his legacy is a scrawl of disused railway tracks. At one time we had a silent urban public transport vehicle, the trolley bus, fast and clean, but yielding little profit to the oil owners: so back to growling, vibrating, smoke emitting diesel buses. However, even these are fighting a losing battle against the growing flood of private motor cars, foisted upon us by the triple means of mass advertising, running down public transport, and increasing urban pressure which makes some personal means of escape almost a necessity.

If one sat down to try to invent a "system" of transport more wasteful of lives, health,[2] land, fuel and mineral resources than that with which monopoly capitalism has served us up, it would be a difficult task indeed. It is important to notice the huge social costs involved, in road building, in the health service and in the destructive effects of the pollutions, and to place these alongside the profits extracted by the monopolies from this organised chaos: also to note that for those not able to afford a private car (and there are many, particularly among the old and the young) getting about, especially in rural areas, is often harder and always dearer than it was twenty years ago.

This is how, under capitalism, "the mode of production and the means of production are continually transformed, revolutionised. . . . That is the law which again and again throws bourgeois production out of its old course, . . . the law which gives capital no rest and continually whispers in its ear: "Go on! Go on!" Indeed the whole of Section Five of Marx's *Wage Labour and Capital*, from which the above words are quoted, is of quite striking relevance to the immediate situation today, both economic and environmental.

The operation of this law of capitalism is presented by the mass media as "progress" and in this way has, temporarily been rendered acceptable. Certainly it has brought with it many advances in knowledge and technology. But we can only truly call "progress" such innovations as bring sustained benefit to the working people as a whole. Much so called capitalist "progress" rapidly becomes self-defeating and soon increases rather than relieves the pressures on the working people, particularly the lower paid sections and the pensioners.

Agriculture

British agriculture provides another example, of obvious and special importance where man's relationship with the rest of nature is concerned. Admittedly output has been greatly increased and is over double the pre-war level. However the main lines of agricultural policy have certainly not been dictated by concern for increasing productivity per acre on a sustained yield basis. What they have been successfully aimed at is the maximisation of the *profit* per acre for a dwindling number of large farmers and big business farming companies. In fact the small farmers have been producing considerably more per acre than the big ones. Nevertheless they are being deliberately driven out of business, along with Mr. Heath's other "lame ducks". Further, the requirements of profit have led to a sharp break with the practices of traditional husbandry which were, in the main, ecologically sound and geared for sustained yield.

The "revolution in the mode of production" here has taken the form of an abrupt switch to heavy mechanisation, and chemical fertilising and pest control. Not only is this "revolution" already encountering the law of diminishing returns, but, as revealed in a recent survey by the Agricultural Advisory Committee, it is already in some areas seriously damaging soil structures which have taken centuries to build up, and so is jeopardising future yields. So far as the workers are concerned, the labour force has been cut by more than half since 1946, thus adding to the unemployed and further contributing to urban congestion, rural depopulation and the decline of local social life in the countryside.

Such, then, seems to be the outline of the developments through the ages, which have led to the

[2] "As Dr. Mackay, of the Road Accident Research Unit at Birmingham University points out, there are 'some 130,000 fatalities and perhaps 1,700,000 serious casualties in the western world *every* year. These figures are on the scale of a medium-sized war continuing all the time'." Peter Laurie, writing in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, Oct. 11, 1970.

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environmental crisis to which U Thant, in our opening quotation, was drawing attention. So far from it being any accident that the crisis is reaching culmination simultaneously with the final crisis of capitalism, it emerges that environmental crisis is inseparable from, is part and parcel of the culmination of capitalism. Capitalism, of its nature, can no more help looting and polluting the planet as rapidly as possible than it can help maximising the exploitation of working people and driving towards trade wars, cold wars, hot wars.

Pollution in Socialist Countries

What then of the position of the Socialist countries in this picture? How does it arise that the USSR now finds that it has, at home, a very considerable pollution problem? It is necessary here to remind ourselves that so long as capitalism remains a power in the world at all, it is able, indeed compelled, to set the world pace in the race towards destruction which we have been describing.

If the newly emerging socialist countries had failed to build up with maximum speed their military, industrial and technological might, they would, as we all know, have been rapidly overrun again by capitalism. Thus capitalism transmits, via the international class struggle, growing environmental crisis to the whole world. It foists, temporarily, upon the whole world something of its own hectic, racing built-in characteristics, recognised in the 1970 Reith Lectures as "The Loss of the Stable State".

Socialism in an all-socialist world will be very different from socialism in a world where capitalism is still a power. The need to "race", with its inherent element of gambling, will be gone. It will be possible to plan the rational use of the world's resources on a sustained yield basis, and to ensure that the necessary thorough research into all side effects and long term consequences precedes every development in methods of production.

Three Faces of Environmental Crisis

Let us turn now to some of the estimates which are currently being made of certain aspects of this environmental crisis, this crisis of imbalance between man and the resources on which he lives all of which are, in their raw state, supplied by nature.

Population. The human population of the world now stands at about three and a half thousand million. The projection of current trends shows a doubling by about 2000 A.D. and two further doublings by about 2050 A.D. (This is a projection of *current* trends. The pattern could obviously be drastically modified by starvation, epidemics, war or alternatively by human planning, though this latter could probably not take much effect until after 2000 A.D.)

Resources—Food

The Committee on Resources and Man set up by the National Academy of Sciences (USA) which published its study in 1969, concluded that "foreseeable increases in food supplies . . . are not likely to exceed about nine times the amount now available".[3] That, the study goes on to say, seems to put earth's carrying capacity at about the figure projected for 2050 A.D. "at a level of chronic near starvation for the great majority". Georg Borgstrom, professor of food science and geography, Michigan State University, in his study of Earth's biological limitations, entitled "Too Many",[4] looks specifically for the limiting factors, what he calls the "bottle-necks of production". In the case of food he sees rainfall as the operative limiting factor, and, on this basis concludes that the earth's maximum carrying capacity, at the extreme vegetarian standard of India, is five thousand million, a level projected for about 1982.

The problem is not that synthesis of many foods cannot be achieved. Techniques for making milk from plants, without the use of a cow, have in fact been known for thousands of years. The crucial question to ask here is not whether the technology is feasible, but whether, taking account of the necessary inputs of labour, of other resources (for installations, etc.) and, above all, of energy, it will in fact prove a better way of supplying the human need for milk than is the use of the rumen of the cow, which is so specially adapted to break down the cellulose of grass, and make it available for use by the human stomach.

Energy

Column a. (on facing page) shows "apparent lifetimes of known recoverable world reserves at current mineable grades and rates of consumption" and are taken from a chart prepared by Preston Cloud, Professor of Biogeology, University of California.[5]

The second column b. is derived from the first and takes into account the population trends discussed earlier. The third column c. takes into account population trends and also shows what

[3] *Resources and Man* a Study and Recommendations by the Committee on Resources and Man of the Division of Earth Sciences, National Academy of Sciences—National Research Council (USA) with the co-operation of the Division of Biology and Agriculture, W. H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco 1969.

[4] *Too Many*, Georg Borgstrom, Macmillan, 1969.

[5] The Chart from which these approximate readings are made was published, together with an article by Preston Cloud, in "The Ecologist" Vol. 1 No. 2, August, 1970.

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would happen if the whole world were to attain an average material standard of life equivalent to that of the US today.

	Years remaining life-time after 1968		
	a.	b.	c.
Coal	800	90	10
Crude Oil	35	20	2
Natural Gas	27	15	2
Uranium 235	26	15	2

These figures are of course estimates. New resources will be discovered and the population trends can alter radically. But it is difficult to escape the startling implications of column c.—that, a world population at these levels will not be able to enjoy material standards in advance of that already obtained in Britain and the US. (This does not mean that other advances in living standards cannot be achieved: rather that socialism will prove to be superior to capitalism more by the quality of life than by the quantity of goods consumed).

Rather than face up to these facts, (e.g. Communism means "abundance" for all), some "Marxists" prefer to put their faith in something else turning up. Of course, this is a possibility. For example, nuclear energy may become economic and the problems of radioactive waste disposal may be solved. But it is totally un-Marxist to assume that something *must* turn up and to ignore the very real dangers of exhausting fuel resources before the alternative supplies are discovered.

Metals

The table below uses the same conventions as described above for fuels.

	Years remaining life-time after 1968		
	a.	b.	c.
Iron>20% Fe	600	80	8
Copper	50	24	3
Lead	28	15	2
Aluminium	200	60	6

Of course new reserves will be found, and new technologies will enable lower grades to be mined. Much here depends on how energy develops, and also on the mineral resources available for the necessary installations. New materials will be found. But the *extent* of success in these directions cannot be forecast. There is no natural law that it is bound to increase. On the other hand, since resources are finite, at some point the law of diminishing returns must begin to operate.

Other Resources

Some other factors to note, in the general world resource picture, are that desert and waste land have increased (due to man's impacts) from one tenth to one quarter of the world's land mass within the last century; forestry reserves—important for timber, for soil fertility and for moderation of climates—are being depleted. (The *Daily Express* boasts that each edition uses "the pulp of 11,000 trees"!); the average world level of groundwater is dropping: i.e. we are taking out more than precipitation is replacing, and depleting nature's underground reservoirs. A central conclusion of the National Academy of Sciences study is that "both population control and better resource management are mandatory and should be effected with as little delay as possible". (See footnote 3.)

Pollution

Aside from the use of resources beyond their capacity for self-renewal, pollution is a major factor in the resource picture, since in numerous ways, some obvious, some subtle and insidious, it actively reduces and distorts the normal biological productivity of the globe. New-Yorkers confined to their flats, with air-conditioners going full blast, by persistent smog last summer; policemen wearing gas masks in the streets of Tokyo; foresters unable to get trees to grow in those areas of the Pennines down-wind of Manchester; water engineers complaining of growing difficulties in keeping our drinking water uncontaminated by toxic chemicals —these are all aspects of pollution which make themselves at once apparent to man. However the cumulative effects of many combinations of pollutions, which at first seem to be remote from man, are probably of greater long term significance.

Dialectical Materialism and the Science of Ecology

In enabling us to understand the interconnections between these three faces of the crisis, Dialectical Materialism can be of decisive importance and it can help us to avoid the blunders which classical "economists", with their blinkered habits of thought, so frequently fall into. Let us put beside each other a few quotations:

(1) "For in nature nothing takes place in isolation. Everything affects every other thing and *vice versa*, and it is mostly because this all-sided motion and interaction is forgotten that our natural scientists are prevented from clearly seeing the simplest things".

(2) "What we call nature, even if we see it as if it were a fixed state, is actually an ever changing product of a highly dynamic system functioning according to subtle and firm principles and rules which cannot be changed by man, although he may disrupt or modify their operation at particular points".

(3) "Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory it takes its revenge on us. Each of them, it is true,

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has in the first place the consequences on which we counted, but, in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. . . . Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature, but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to know and correctly apply its laws".

(4) "It will not be possible to harmonise human development with the natural environment on the necessary grand scale until those in charge, the politicians, administrators, managers, technologists and others are educated afresh so that they learn to see problems as a whole. At present their education has taught them to think about their environment only spasmodically and in unrelated compartments. Indeed modern man has been artificially conditioned not to see his environment as a whole".

(5) "Thus we have once again returned to the mode of contemplation of the great founders of Greek philosophy, that all nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from grains of sand to suns, from protista to man, has its existence in eternal coming into being and going out of being, in ceaseless flux, in unresting motion and change".

(6) ". . . the biosphere is a complete, self-contained, permanently balanced system organised to provide all its own needs and to break down, disseminate and re-use its waste materials through subtle processes of dissolution and decay. . . ."

Quotations No. (1), (3) and (5) are taken from Engels (1) and (3) from *The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man;* (5) from *Introduction to the Dialectics of Nature.* Nos. (2), (4) and (6) are from *The Environmental Revolution* by the leading British ecologist and conservationist, Max Nicholson.[6]

Almost exactly a century separates the two but the over-lapping of thought, the common ground in the approach to nature is most striking. As in many other scientific fields, the scientific basis of Marxism is proving to be an essential tool for other scientists —in this case, the ecologists. By definition the science of Ecology is that which "seeks to elucidate the principles governing the interactions of the natural processes of land, water and all living things".[7]

The conclusions of Ecology are, therefore, the very laws of nature to which Engels was referring when he wrote that "all our mastery" over nature consists in our "being able[8] to know and correctly apply its laws". It is our job, by political action, to correctly apply them.

Laws of Nature

Some of these laws of nature which ecology has established are of particular relevance to our present situation. First in importance is the law that species which approach too close to the limits of the resources on which they live, suffer reduction, often severe and sometimes leading to extinction. Next we might place the law that diversity in an ecosystem makes for stability whereas oversimplification leads to vulnerability. It is clear that we are today simultaneously narrowing the basis for our existence (by reducing the earth's vegetation, killing off the phytoplankton of the sea, etc.) whilst widening the demands we make (by population expansion and increased per capita consumption).

In this connection Borgstrom has cogently argued that our reliance on pesticides is, in itself, a proof of human over-population, since this is having a destructive effect on food chains which ultimately contribute to the feeding of man. The present gain in productivity thus to some extent is being achieved at the expense of the future biological productivity of the planet.

Even without any detailed resources assessment these laws of ecology tell us that the present population explosion ought to be defused; that the onslaught on the plankton and green plants by pollution, concrete and tarmac, should be controlled; that the extinction of ever more species of wild flora and fauna reduces the diversity of the global ecosystem, leading to increased vulnerability. Furthermore, it is a delusion to hope for the complete defeat of "pests and diseases" since these organisms, as much as we, are an inseparable part of the whole system, and often are vital to the whole recycling process.

If we held the common religious beliefs, that man is above nature and has a God-given right to subdue it, we might pass by these conclusions of ecology as of no consequence to us. But, unless our Dialectical Materialist basis is a mere empty form of words, we cannot pass them by, but must

[6] "The Environmental Revolution" by Max Nicholson. Pub. Hodder and Stoughton 1970. This author was Director-General of the Nature Conservancy 1952-1966.

[7] *Man and Environment*, Robert Arvill, Penguin Books Ltd., 1967.

[8] As usual Engels is very precise. He does not make wild claims as a propagandist—"socialism *will* do this, that or the other". He states clearly that socialism is essential to enable mankind to "correctly apply" the laws of nature but clearly is under no illusions that the correct application of these laws will occur automatically.

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accept them as valid and blinding upon mankind, and should adjust our policies and planning accordingly.

World Pattern of Environmental Crisis

Before turning our attention to the way forward, towards a restoring of balance, it will be useful to take note of the uneven pattern of the crisis over the world and the particular features of its manifestation in Britain. At one extreme we have a position in India and East Pakistan where, owing to the low level of industrial development, pollution is not a major factor, but an exploding peasant population has far outrun its present home food production capacity and increasingly therefore makes for the towns. Little productive work is available here and employment in provision of services is the main means of distributing what little purchasing power is available to buy the shipments of imported grain. The population density over-all is about 405 per square mile, growing fast. Malnutrition is general and chronic.

The UK, on the other hand, with a density of 588 per square mile (one of the very highest in the world) has major and growing problems of pollution, both from industry and intensive farming, of water supply, of transport congestion and urban development in a situation of land shortage. Home production can feed about half the present population. For the rest we rely on imported food and particularly on what Borgstrom has called the "protein swindle" whereby the imperialist countries use their position to extract from the whole world—particularly the oceans—a quite disproportionate share of what the hungry nations chiefly lack, protein. Coal we have in plenty for some time to come and can produce about half our needed iron ore. For the rest we rely heavily on imported raw materials to feed the industry on which much of our population must depend to earn its living in the world. It is a fair question to ask *how many of those countries which now have a surplus of food and raw materials to export to us will still have such a surplus in thirty years time*, when the world population has doubled.

In the United States

The environmental crisis in America has, broadly speaking, the same features as in Britain, escalating pollution problems and a very vulnerable position as regards resources and raw materials. Dr. Raymond Ewell, of the State University of New York, Buffalo, contributed to the "Chemical and Engineering News" (USA) of August 24, 1970, an article headed "US will lag USSR in Raw Materials". The details he gives make it plain that whereas the USSR is moving well within its capacity, where most raw materials are concerned, the USA is facing a rapidly tightening situation and is having to depend more and more on imports from all over the world. He notes how heavily distorted is the USA pattern of production towards the "luxury" trades—an inevitable feature of capitalism, with its unbalanced distribution of purchasing power. Significantly, his list of proposals consists very largely of cultivating "the best possible relationships", with a whole host of countries which still have raw material reserves. This, of course, we may translate into "continuing to prop up regimes which will permit us to exploit our monopoly position in extracting raw materials".

Political Consequences

The political consequences of the resources crisis are likely to be two-sided. On the one hand it must accelerate greatly in the coming decades the breakdown of the world monopoly capitalist system, its inability to provide for the basic needs of the people. On the other hand it will certainly make much harder the task of socialist reconstruction.

For it is a very different matter to build Socialism on the basis of resource plenty (where the problem is one of organising development) from what it will be to build Socialism in a situation where population has outrun resources, or where capitalist over-development has left a country with a lopsided pattern of production heavily weighted towards a very restricted range of products. Cuba's almost total dependence on sugar is a case in point. Whilst, therefore, the plight of those countries, where environmental crisis now shows the symptoms of mass malnutrition and starvation, is severe indeed, we must face the possibility of grave difficulties arising in heavily industrialised countries, both from shortage of the raw materials which feed the industries on which the people depend, and from a decline in the volume of the food surpluses of the present food exporting countries.

Some Proposals for an Environmental Policy

Now, whatever advances the future may have in store, in technology, in substitution of raw materials and in development of energy, as said earlier, the *extent* of these advances cannot be forecast. It is surely the part of wise leadership to plan for the future within the framework of what can, with reasonable certainty, be foreseen. On this basis, as well as for fundamental reasons of the dialectics of nature, and also because, as we have seen, environmental crisis is part and parcel of the final crisis of capitalism, it seems right for us now to throw ourselves into the broadening conservationist movement in defence of the environment, to help to organise it and give it political consciousness,

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and link it with all the other spheres of struggle against capitalism and for socialism.

Anxiety is justifiably felt that the needs of the environment often conflict with the need for jobs. However, the principle here is no different from, though of wider application than, that which we observe towards the arms industry, or the armed forces as a form of employment. The wider considerations must give way to the narrower. Let us not however forget that it takes the final insanity of capitalism to posit the actual need to *make work* ("create jobs" is the phrase). Many of us may think that it's not work, sweated or monotonous or both, by the 40, 50 or 60 hour week, that we want, but a livelihood, perhaps even some time and facilities to actually *live*.

Capitalism in Britain increasingly offers us the alternatives of working ourselves into ulcers or thrombosis (such is the pace of the "rat race") or existing on the dole. Here is a further reason for fighting for shorter hours and longer holidays. We can have no interest in increasing the distortions of capitalist production and so adding, at the expense of resource depletion, to the mounting volume of trash and socially useless, or harmful commodities. It is our interest to produce what the people want and need (not what the mass media tell us we need) and to share equitably the work involved in production. However the task of changing the course of Britain's productive efforts so as both to produce and distribute what the people want, and to ensure that the country is fit and pleasant to live in, is so enormous that it is likely fully to employ the talents of all our citizens. Let us look at some of the practicable steps, most of which would create increased demand for labour:

Practicable Steps

(1) Implementation of stringent anti-pollution laws, based on the proposals recently adopted by the Communist Party. These, seeing pollution as a side effect of production, place the responsibility of it squarely on the owners of the means of production and require of them the necessary outlay to bring the pollutions within tolerable limits.

(2) Ecologically based agricultural and forestry policies, aimed not at maximising profits per acre, and the profits of the food, chemical and machinery monopolies, but at maximising *productivity* per acre on a sustained yield basis.

(3) A massive drive on slum clearance and rehousing and restoration of derelict land.

(4) Provision of parks, open spaces, recreational areas and facilities within easy reach of the homes of the people, so as to reduce the wear and tear and wastage involved in travel. Plan locations of industry and housing to reduce the total volume of travel and transport needed.

(5) Build an integrated but diversified public transport system, passenger and freight, restoring railways and waterways where appropriate; the whole to be aimed at providing safe, quick, frequent and convenient services, with minimal waste of fuel and other resources and minimal pollution.

(6) Adopt policies designed to stabilise the population at the earliest reasonable time (probably about 2000 A.D.) so as to ease the human pressures on the environment and make it possible to begin a reduction of population if, by that time, the state and prospects of resources seem to require it.

(7) Stringently ration, and control the content of, advertising, so as to save resources and deflate the "trash market" which is a growing feature of capitalism. (This would also weaken the vicious grip on the mass media exerted by the monopolies.)

(8) Seek international agreement on steps to control pollution and manage the world's resources on a rational basis. This involves, of course, rationing and a phased shift away from dependence on non-renewable resources towards dependence on renewable resources, and requires population policies to match. The 1972 UN Stockholm Conference can be a focal point here. Pressure should be put on the British Government to strive, at this conference, to give a positive content, in terms of sound environmental action, to the concept of peaceful co-existence.

Tory and Right-Wing Labour

Such a series of aims fits well within the framework of Part 3 of our programme *The British Road to Socialism* and could help to build into the "broad alliance" all the progressive elements in the rapidly growing Conservation Movement. A foretaste of how it would be received in a parliament of the present composition has perhaps been given us in the disgraceful capitulation over Nabarro's Tobacco Bill, despite the overwhelming evidence of the Royal College of Physicians' report.

It will be necessary to defeat not only the overt agents of the monopolies but also the right-wing Labour line put forward by Crosland who, though correctly pointing out that there are sectional interests being pushed within the Conservation Movement,—the privileged classes trying to hold onto their special playgrounds etc.—clings to the illusion that poverty can be eliminated by capitalist expansion and that Britain can quite easily support 70 million people.

He quite fails to note that capitalist Britain does

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not "support" her present 54 million but leans heavily on the "protein swindle", described earlier, and on exploitation of the underdeveloped countries; a situation which must make her the more vulnerable as these countries gain in economic independence, as witness the panic among the oil companies at the recent price rises dictated by the oil producing countries. Such are the blinkers of "classical" economic thinking.

Shedding the Blinkers

Not least of the gains which will flow from involvement in the struggle to save the environment will be the shedding of these very "blinkers" which capitalism has strapped upon us. Most of us are kept so busy getting and keeping a job that we simply cannot afford to question whether what we are producing, or the means by which we produce it, are beneficial or harmful to our fellow men and to nature. Indeed, the fact that our whole existence depends on nature is almost completely concealed from us. In fighting to save the environment we shall re-discover this dependence and so re-connect with that evolutionary tap-root in nature which has suffered such a trauma under capitalism.

Our well known human adaptability has this disadvantage, that we very quickly accept the abnormal as normal. This makes it harder for us to see that the present break-neck speed of development of the industrial countries, based on the using up of the planet's non-renewable resources, cannot possibly be sustained. But see it, of course, we shall, because the inexorable logic of events will force it upon us. As we shake off some of the more euphoric dreams of capitalist science fiction, we need not mourn much for their passing. The discrepancy between such dreams and the kind of living for which the long processes of evolution have prepared us is already turning dream into nightmare.

The tragic scale of the incidence of mental and nervous breakdown can be no more than the tip of the total iceberg of alienation and frustration. As we turn to the task of finding and maintaining the best possible deal for our species, *within and as part of* the dynamic equilibrium of nature, we shall remember that that, in reality, is what living has always been all about—though class divided societies have temporarily hidden the fact—and from that task flow all our human satisfactions in living. The whole range of Dialectical and Historical Materialist thought is now needed, not only to steer towards those changes in the structure of society which will empower it to "correctly apply" the laws of nature, but also to enable it to know those laws for what they truly are.

Bangla Desh Background

Conrad Wood

> ". . . *in none of the South Asian countries has a political regime been unseated by means of a popular revolt*".

These words were written by Gunnar Myrdal in his authoritative work *Asian Drama* (p. 115) which was published in 1968. In December of the same year a movement began among the workers and students of Pakistan which culminated, in March 1969, in the overthrow of the autocratic regime of Ayub Khan.

For Pakistan, the Ayub regime meant rule by the army and the top bureaucrats. These served the interests of the ruling class alliance of West Pakistani big business and big landlords, backed by the USA, whose capitalists have penetrated deeply into the Pakistani economy. This economy combines all the backwardness of underdevelopment with an extreme degree of monopolisation. It is widely reported that more than 70 per cent of Pakistani industry, finance and trade is in the hands of about two dozen families, backed by foreign capital.

The 1968-9 movement was based, in East Pakistan, on an 11-Point Programme put forward by the Students' Action Committee (but, in fact chalked out by the Communist Party of East Pakistan). Two of the demands in this programme were

(a) for an end to the military dictatorship and the establishment of parliamentary democracy.
(b) for autonomy for the various Pakistani provinces[1].

[1] The other demands included an independent and neutral foreign policy, the nationalisation of banks, insurance, heavy and key industries, a living wage for the workers, the reduction of rent and taxes, the liquidation of illiteracy and cheap, easily available education for all.

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Some background is required to understand this demand for autonomy.

The Background of Pakistan

Pakistan was created in 1947 by the Partition of British India. Partition came as the culmination of a long period of political development in which the British rulers of India tried to weaken the independence movement by a policy of "divide and rule". The British raj was able to exploit the fears of the Muslim section of the upper strata of Indian society at the more rapid advance of wealthy Hindus in the economic and political spheres. These fears expressed themselves in apprehension that the religion and distinctive culture of the Muslim community would be suffocated by militant revivalist Hinduism which was suspected of lurking behind the secular cloak of the Congress party. (The economic basis of these fears for Muslim religion and culture should always be borne in mind, however.) By the 1940's the demand for an Islamic state in which Muslims would be the majority had become very strong.

Partition created an almost unique state comprising two "wings"— East Pakistan and West Pakistan—separated by about 1,000 miles of Indian territory. The west wing is the larger in area, about the size of France and Britain together. The east wing is only about a sixth as big but has the larger population. In simple, easily remembered figures, the east wing has around 75 million people, the west wing about 57 million.

There is another striking difference between the two wings. East Pakistan has a relatively homogeneous population linguistically, with the vast majority speaking Bengali. The west, however, is inhabited by four main language groups—the Punjabis, the Sindhis, the Baluchis, and the Pathans of the North-West Frontier Province.

Pakistan's Rulers

The two dozen monopolist families which form a key section of Pakistan's ruling class are concentrated in the Punjab and the city of Karachi. This largely Punjabi ruling class has tended to treat the other provinces of Pakistan (especially the east wing) as colonial appendages. In the classic way, raw materials have been drained from them, manufactured goods sold to them and the lion's share of investment in industry has taken place in the Punjab. Thus, whilst in 1947, at Partition, it was estimated that the two wings began at more or less the same (very low) industrial level, the east wing is now at only 60 per cent of the level of industrialisation of the west (largely the Punjab). This is hardly surprising since nearly two-thirds of the outlay on Pakistan's first three five-year plans was on West Pakistan even though it has the minority of the country's population.

An especially sore point for the Bengalis has been that Pakistan's biggest export-earner of the foreign exchange which is badly needed for development is Bengali jute, so that Bengal's jute has been used largely to finance industrial development in the Punjab.

Another Bengali grievance relates to the Kashmir issue. Kashmir is the territory claimed by both Pakistan and India and at the moment effectively partitioned between the two. The rival claims to Kashmir have involved the armies of the two countries in more than one outbreak of fighting and the issue has become an important one for the Punjabi officers who dominate Pakistan's army. (Not only has "Punjab blood been shed over Kashmir" but the territory adjoins the Punjab which has close historical links with it.)

Economic Situation

The Pakistan economy has for a long time been squeezed to pay for expensive (mainly American) equipment to build up the army. India has been painted as Pakistan's main enemy and the Kashmir dispute has been one of the main causes of the tense relationship. 60 per cent of government expenditure in Pakistan has been on the army and the Bengalis have claimed that the east wing pays the lion's share of the Army's costs whilst 80 per cent of the military spending takes place in the west wing. There is undoubtedly great feeling in Bengal that the province has been exploited to build up the military-bureaucratic regime for the sake of the ambitions of the Punjabi-officered Army with regard to Kashmir. (90 per cent of the Army's officers come from West Pakistan).

It should be realised that the policy of hostility to India has been far worse for the economy of the east wing than for that of the west. At Partition Bengal was cut in two, into a quite highly industrialised West Bengal (in India) and a largely agricultural East Bengal (the east wing of Pakistan). In particular the jute mills of West Bengal were separated from their raw jute-growing hinterland in East Bengal. Moreover Bengal's coalfield was on the Indian side of the frontier so that today Chinese coal in East Bengal costs Rs. 172 per ton whilst Indian coal just across the frontier can be had for Rs. 50. But not by the East Bengalis since trade relations between India and Pakistan have been disrupted over the Kashmir issue about which the Bengalis feel distinctly unenthusiastic. (Kashmir is 1,000 miles from Bengal).

By 1965 East Bengal found itself 25 per cent behind West Pakistan in income per head. By now the discrepancy has widened to 40 per cent. But not only is East Bengal falling behind West Pakistan in development. Living standards in the east wing

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are actually deteriorating. The availability of foodgrains per head has fallen 3.2 per cent in the past six years and another key staple in the Bengali diet, edible oils, by 33 per cent. This is not surprising since West Pakistan has had 20 times as much spent on its agricultural development as East Bengal.

Demands for Autonomy

This, then is the background to the demands for autonomy and political democracy which were heard in the 1968-9 upsurge (which involved West Pakistan as well as East Bengal). Unfortunately the movement had serious weaknesses. Lack of proper leadership and the absence of solid unity among the democratic forces were two, but the relative weakness of the democratic forces among the peasantry (who were mislead by the reactionaries) was noticeable.

Perhaps these weaknesses are not surprising when the long years of military dictatorship are borne in mind. The democratic parties were made illegal and experienced all the problems of trying to work in a mass way under such conditions. Moreover the Pakistani democratic parties lack the relatively long experience of comparative freedom of political organisation of say, the Indian Left. Even before military dictatorship was clamped down in 1958, most Pakistani parties represented little more than a few squabbling cliques of landlords.

However, one great thing was achieved by the 1968-9 movement—Ayub was toppled and the ruling classes badly shaken. Consequently, when (in March 1969) Ayub was replaced as President by another general, Yahya Khan, although, superficially there appeared to be little change, appearances were deceptive. Yahya was, in fact, far less secure than Ayub and he, and the ruling classes he represented, realised that concessions would have to be made, that they could not rule in the old way. Thus, although martial law was imposed by Yahya in March 1969 he had to announce, in November, in the face of further disturbances, that he would concede two of the main demands of the democratic movement:

(a) a return to parliamentary government, and
(b) the establishment of a federal form of government for Pakistan.

In making these concessions the ruling classes thereby hoped to stabilise their rule by means of a compromise with the right wing of the democratic forces, especially the capitalists of East Bengal and the liberal landlords of the smaller nationalities of West Pakistan. But although the ruling classes were making concessions on democracy and autonomy for their own tactical reasons, the Communist Party of East Pakistan (CPEP) decided to take advantage of the reforms on the grounds that even a bourgeois democratic regime would be a significant political advance on the continuing military dictatorship.

Yahya had declared that elections would take place in 1970 for a Constituent Assembly which would meet not only to form a government but to give Pakistan a new constitution. The CPEP decided to participate in the elections by putting up its own candidates through other parties (since, of course, the CPEP is illegal).

The Awami League

The main party chosen for this purpose was the National Awami Party, a progressive party which was formed in 1957 but which split in 1964 with one wing under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani. Bhashani has usually been labelled as pro-China but he is not a Marxist and, in fact, his political line tends to be difficult to pin down as he speaks at one moment in terms of socialism and the next in terms of Islam. Although the Bhashani NAP has considerable influence among sections of the Bengali people, the other section of the party, led by Muzaffar Ahmed and supported by the Communist Party, is very strong in East Bengal. In West Pakistan, this National Awami Party is strong in North-West Frontier Province and in Baluchistan where it is led by liberal-minded tribal chiefs and landowners who tend to take a reformist rather than a revolutionary line.

The strongest party in East Bengal, however, is the Awami League (AL). Much of its strength was built up in the period leading up to the election (i.e. during 1970) when Yahya had much of the Bengali Left in prison whilst the AL leaders, such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were able to consolidate their support among the masses.

The Awami League takes its stand mainly on the issues of a return to civilian rule and of autonomy for East Bengal. It is the party of the nationalist-minded capitalists and middle classes of Bengal who resent the domination of Punjabi big business. Consequently the AL stands for a weak central government, having powers over defence and foreign affairs only. This would enable a Bengali provincial government to re-establish trade with India and would give it control over its own tax revenues which could be used in the interests of the Bengali bourgeoisie instead of for building up the army and West Pakistani industry.

The programme of the AL therefore has many progressive aspects—parliamentary democracy, full autonomy for all Pakistani nationalities, the curbing of exploitation by the monopolies and good neighbourly relations with India.

On the other hand there has been a tendency for AL leaders to stress national or regional differences within Pakistan rather than class differences. Thus instead of being careful always to designate the

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Punjabi ruling class as the main enemy, they have sometimes talked as though the whole Punjabi (or even worse, the whole West Pakistani) people were the enemy. Talk of "Punjabi ambitions" instead of "the ambitions of the Punjabi monopolists" has not helped the democratic movement combat the ruling class tactic of "divide and rule". Moreover it should be stressed that the leaders of the AL were the people who took Pakistan into the US war pact of SEATO in the 1950's and the leadership for some time has entertained hopes of US aid for the benefit of the Bengali capitalists. On more than one occasion Sheikh Mujib has declared that only the Awami League can "save East Bengal from communism" and he has been frequently labelled as pro-West.

The Peoples' Party

The largest party to emerge recently in West Pakistan has been the Peoples' Party (PP) of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former Foreign Minister of Pakistan under Ayub. Bhutto makes great claims to be a socialist and pro-China. In fact the PP slogan is "Islam is our faith, democracy our policy and socialism our economy". The Peoples' Party has certainly captured much support among the younger generation in the Punjab and Sind with its anti-India and socialist slogans. But it should be stressed that Bhutto's socialism is a sham and sheer opportunism and the party's real source of strength lies in the big landlord class of the area. On December 11, 1970 he was interviewed by the *Times* South Asia Correspondent Peter Hazelhurst. The *Times* report is revealing:

> " 'I am a true socialist—a democratic socialist who believes in socialism on the Willy Brandt or British patterns.' . . . Outlining the views of his Peoples Party on socialism, Mr. Bhutto said: 'We will nationalise the banks, or at least some banks. Then we will be able to assess how public sector banks run in competition to the private sector.' . . . His party would also nationalise basic industries like gas, natural resources, shipping, paper and cement. 'We would leave the textile industry alone because they are doing well and there is an element of competition.' "

Four days later the unhappy Hazelhurst had to report:

> "Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples' Party today denied that he had told the *Times* that he believed in a Willy Brandt or British type of socialism. He attacked the British press and and accused correspondents of distorting his statements to serve 'imperialist interests.' "

We then discover the reason for the *volte face:*

> "Mr. Bhutto's opponents are using his statements in the *Times* to embarass him on the eve of the country's provincial elections. At the same time the leftists in his own party have taken him to task for his interpretation of socialism.
>
> Mr. Bhutto . . . has gone back on most of the points he made to me last week.
>
> He has, for instance, denied a categoric statement that he would not nationalise the textile industry if he came to power. He told journalists today that he would include the textile industry in his plans for nationalisation. He also said he had never told the *Times* that by introducing socialism to Pakistan he was doing more to stem the tide of communism in Asia than the Americans. 'It is a white lie and mischievous' he said."!

Bhutto, who has enlisted the support of the biggest landlords in West Pakistan, is himself from one of the biggest landlord families in Sind and his great hope is to become Pakistan Prime Minister. There seems little doubt that in this event he would base his policies on extreme hostility to India and eventually an offensive to "liberate" Kashmir. (In fact Bhutto has called for a "Thousand Year War" against India.) This explains his much-trumpeted (and genuine) pro-China policy which dates back to the days when he cemented Pakistan's relationship with China when he was Foreign Minister in the mid-60's.

The pro-China feeling in the PP is accompanied by a certain suspicion of the US government which, although it has been keen to involve Pakistan in its war pacts and equip its Army, cannot afford to antagonise the largest country in the "Third World" (India) too much. Bhutto has also built up a close relationship with the hawks in the Pakistan Army who wish to take a strong line not only on Kashmir but also with the Bengali nationalists. Thus, it is obvious that Bhutto's objective of a strongly centralised Pakistan capable of waging war with India if necessary stands directly counter to the policies of the AL for a decentralised Pakistan having closer ties with her neighbour.

The December 1970 Elections

With this party political background, the poll for the Constituent Assembly, which eventually took place in December 1970, can be considered. These were Pakistan's first free elections with 56 million voters going to the polls to elect 313 members to the Constituent Assembly (CA).

The main outcome was an enormous victory for the AL in East Bengal where it won 167 out of the 169 seats and around 97 per cent of the vote. The size of the victory was partly due to the withdrawal of Bhashani's NAP from the election when pressure from the Maoists in the party forced him to boycott the electoral procedure.

In West Pakistan (as in the East) the elections were a disaster for the extreme Right-wing parties, such as Jamaat-i-Islami, the fanatical Muslim

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party financed by the CIA. Bhutto was the biggest winner of seats: his PP took 62 out of 82 in the Punjab and 19 out of 27 in Sind, but none elsewhere.

The NAP took some seats in both wings and emerged as the largest party in both North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Also a small number of Communists were elected to the new Constituent Assembly. But the main result of the election was that the AL now had an overall majority in the CA and it was now in a position to achieve its aim of autonomy for East Bengal by passing a constitution (along with the NAP and other allies) which would give the central government only limited powers.

This was, of course, just the opposite to what Bhutto wanted—*himself* as Prime Minister and a strong central government. Thus, his first response was to try and get Yahya (as President) to postpone calling the CA. But when, on February 13, Yahya announced that the Assembly would meet on March 3, Bhutto had to move fast. He met the hawks in the Army (including Tikka Khan, later to become notorious as martial law administrator in East Bengal) and two days later announced that he would boycott the Assembly, would only enter it on his own terms, would call a general strike if it met, and threatened anyone "be he black, white or khaki who attends". In fact two thirds of those elected to the CA had already assembled in Dacca, the East Bengali capital—more than enough to frame a constitution without Bhutto's help.

Bhutto's speech sparked off a remarkable reaction in East Bengal. The speech was obviously regarded as the last straw: a final effort to deny the democratic forces the victory they had won at the polls in December. A wave of fury swept the province and the demand for independence appears to have been made spontaneously in the streets despite the AL leaders' repeated statements that they did not advocate secession.

Repressions and Struggle

On March 1 Yahya made a tough speech which precipitated a three-week crisis which ended in Army repression. Yahya postponed the Constituent Assembly which was due to meet in only 48 hours and ominously replaced the Governors of the various provinces with martial law administrators. Immediately Sheikh Mujib called for a general strike and demonstrations in East Bengal in protest. But Communist Party warnings to the Awami League leadership to prepare for repression were ignored despite the fact that the hawks in the Army were demanding strong-arm tactics against the Bengali people.

Meanwhile, in West Pakistan, the fight of East Bengal for democracy and autonomy found response among the masses led by the democratic movement. Baluchis, Pathans and Sindhis marched together in the streets of Karachi in support of East Bengal and clashes took place with PP supporters. The situation was obviously full of menace for the ruling clique which had always kept power by playing west wing off against east wing.

Yahya therefore attempted to compromise and buy time by calling for a round table conference for March 10 and declaring that the CA would in fact meet on March 25. Yet at the same time, he showed what was behind his conciliating words when he appointed hawk Tikka Khan as martial law administrator of East Bengal and said he would use the army to prevent the disintegration of Pakistan.

Sheikh Mujib now responded by demanding the withdrawal of martial law, the return of the troops to their barracks and the immediate transfer of power to the people's elected representatives. Even more important, he launched a non-co-operation movement which closed government offices in the East and amounted to declaring economic warfare on the West Pakistan ruling clique. Bank transactions were stopped as was payment of taxes and rents. Trade between the wings was disrupted, thereby causing the closing down of many Western factories which lost their markets in the East.

In fact, from now on (March 7) East Bengal was virtually independent, with all officials and judges obeying Sheikh Mujib and the AL, so much so that when the President flew to Dacca on March 16 he had to ask the Sheikh to guarantee law and order.

Independence Demanded for Bangla Desh

On March 9 Sheikh Mujib had formed village action committees and had said that complete independence for "Bangla Desh" ("Bengali Land" —East Bengal) was now inevitable. Yet still there was no serious attempt to prepare for armed conflict despite the calls of the Communist Party.

The army was now virtually an occupation force on foreign territory and it attempted to break the non-co-operation movement by provoking armed clashes. On March 19 Mujib announced that 300 people had been killed in Bangla Desh by the army since March 1. Three days later Yahya postponed the CA yet again, this time 3 days before it was due to meet and Mujib at last called on every house in Bangla Desh to be made into "a strong fortress".

The Leninist position on self-determination has always been that, although "big states afford indisputable advantages, both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests

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of the masses"[2], the right of nations to self-determination must be recognised.

Lenin always stressed that the *right* to self-determination should never be confused with the *expediency* of a given nation's secession, which a communist party should always judge on the merits of each particular case in conformity with the interests of the masses. There can be little doubt however that the people of Bangla Desh can achieve no advance until the present regime of the West Pakistani generals is defeated. This is the foremost objective of the overwhelming mass of the people of Bangla Desh who have seen for themselves that being part of a Pakistani state dominated by the present (mainly Punjabi) ruling class has meant virtual colonial status and repression of their national culture.

Under these circumstances the people of Bangla Desh have been forced to seek the furtherance of their democratic aims in terms of separation from the present Pakistan state.

But the call for armed preparations had come too late—the Army was already preparing to move. Virtually the last act before the repression came occurred on March 23, the Pakistan National Day. Whilst in West Pakistan Republic Day was being celebrated, in the east wing the national flag was being hauled down and the new flag of Bangla Desh hoisted.

The Army Attacks

The beginning of all-out repression came on March 24 when troops machine-gunned large crowds in the East Bengali provincial towns of Rangpur and Chittagong, causing more than 135 casualties. Mujib called a general strike, but troops from West Pakistan were moving on Bangla Desh by sea and air. In Bengal the army moved to seize the only main Bengali unit—the East Pakistan Rifles—in their barracks. In the ensuing battle the police joined the EPR men and Mujib at last declared East Bengal the "Peoples' Democratic Republic of Bangla Desh".

Yahya immediately banned the Awami League and called Mujib a traitor. At the same time the army, acting according to a well-laid plan, moved through Dacca with artillery and US-made M24 tanks, wiping out anyone who might prove to be a future leader of Bangla Desh—students, teachers, leaders of political parties and trades unions—as well as destroying Bengali Press offices.

It is a fact that the Army was helped in this repression by some Biharis (a substantial Urdu-speaking minority in East Bengal) who acted as spies and informers, pointing out homes of AL leaders, putting paint marks on the doors of houses of men wanted by the army and so on. In this situation it is, perhaps, not surprising, especially in view of the Bengali chauvinist propaganda of the AL in the past, that in some areas massacres of some Biharis took place solely because they were Biharis. Not only was this a crime: it gave the Pakistani military administration a propaganda point with which they tried to cloak by far the greater atrocity—committed by themselves on the Bengali people.

Soon the story of the army's barbarities became known to the outside world as refugees poured into India and press correspondents were thrown out of Dacca. On April 4 the Soviet government demanded that the West Pakistani government stop the bloodshed and cease its repression of the people of East Bengal. The Soviet government called for a political settlement taking the people's wishes into account and stated that Sheikh Mujib, as the elected representative of the Bengali people, should be freed. Later, in May at an international peace conference in Budapest, the Soviet Union initiated a proposal, which was carried, that the representative of Bangla Desh should accept the Lambrakis Peace Medal in recognition of his country's heroic struggle.

About the same time the Chinese government accused India of "flagrantly interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan". This sounds ominously like backing for the Pakistani government line that the situation in East Bengal is basically caused by Indian interference. Moreover the Chinese government is reported to have declared that it would not tolerate any interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs, thus raising the hopes of reactionaries everywhere at the possibility of war in the region between countries which ought to be working together against imperialism.

The attitude of the Western capitalist countries has, in general, been merely to commiserate in a "non-political" "humanitarian" way with the sufferings of the people of "East Pakistan" but to declare that, after all, the matter is an internal affair for the Pakistan government. This attitude basically leaves Yahya a free hand in his work of repression whilst conveniently ignoring the fact that the regime in Pakistan depends for its very survival on arms and aid from the West.

International Solidarity

Yahya admitted in a broadcast at the end of May that the economy was in a "terrible" state, as East Bengal jute exports have almost ceased. The Western powers are in an especially strong position to put pressure on Yahya since Pakistani foreign exchange reserves are down to $100 to $200 million and aid usually accounts for about two

[2] Lenin, The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination, Collected Works, Vol. 2, p. 146.

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fifths of the country's foreign exchange requirements.

All over the world the demand has gone up from the left and democratic movement that the imperialist powers stop all kinds of aid for the Yahya regime and that the Bangla Desh government should be recognised and aided in its struggle for self-determination for the Bengali people. In Britain this struggle has won very wide support in the labour movement and elsewhere. In July leading trades unionists made an initial contribution of £350 (with promises of more to follow) to help the families of workers killed by Yahya's troops. Earlier, over 200 Members of Parliament had signed a motion demanding that "the provisional Government of Bangla Desh should be recognised as the vehicle for the expression of self-determination by the people of East Bengal".

There have been signs that the capitalist powers are uneasy over the worldwide upsurge in support for Bangla Desh. They are trying to manoeuvre to give the impression of pressurising Yahya by demanding some "overt and credible" move towards the "restoration of normal life" in East Bengal. In April the US State Department declared that arms supplies to Pakistan had been stopped and that economic aid to Pakistan was under review. However, in June it became known that Pakistani ships had left New York with large cargoes of US arms bound for Karachi. Moreover, in July, it was reported that the Nixon administration was seeking Congressional approval for £2 million in low interest credits for military aid to Pakistan.

The Struggle for Independence

Meanwhile, in Bangla Desh, although the army soon gained control of the main towns and roads, large areas of the countryside were controlled by the Mukti Fouj, the liberation fighters. Sangram Samitis ("fighting committees"), which are all-party committees, have been set up in many areas, in some places led by the Communist Party.

But, unfortunately, the Maoists of West Bengal (India) have declared themselves to be opposed to the independence movement which they have called an "imperialist conspiracy" against China. Some British journalists in the area report that the Pakistani army is suspected of supplying arms to West Bengal Maoists in order to embarrass the Indian government, but these reports are unsubstantiated.

However, the Maoists in *East* Bengal appear to have broken from the united resistance movement against the military regime on the grounds that the main contradiction is not between East Bengal and West Pakistan (the main body of the Left has never said it was) but between the feudal and the oppressed classes within East Bengal.

The great majority of the Left profoundly disagree with this disruptive view. They have declared that the main fight is now against the Pakistani military regime. The Communist Party of East Bengal (Bangla Desh) has declared that the provisional government of the People's Democratic Republic of Bangla Desh is the only legally constituted government of East Bengal and has appealed for a broad united Front against the aggressors. This appeal has been backed by the Bangla Desh Trade Union Centre and the Students' Union of Bangla Desh. Both the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have also taken firm stands in support of the united fight of the East Bengal people for an independent sovereign Bangla Desh.

During May and June it became obvious that the Pakistan army was facing great resistance to their attempt to repress the people of Bangla Desh. A general admitted that 10 per cent of the "East Pakistanis" in the army had defected to the Mukti Fouj which achieved a great success in holding the strategically placed town of Feni (on the only rail link from the main port Chittagong to the capital Dacca) for several weeks in the face of army attacks. The Pakistani journalist A. Mascarenhas, who fled to Britain after seeing the army's genocide in Bengal, reported that an officer had told him that the army's casualties were exceeding those of the 1965 war with India.

Yahya's Problems

At the same time political problems were plaguing Yahya. Not only had the regime been forced to carry out widespread arrests of West Pakistani politicians supporting Bangla Desh on May 9, but also its attempts to get together a group of quislings in East Bengal to rule instead of the AL met with abyssmal failure. Thus, it seems no accident that from about this time we can detect new tactics being adopted by the army administration. The decision appears to have been taken to direct the main force of the repression against the substantial Hindu minority in East Bengal. This provided a useful scapegoat for the breach between the east and west wings, the line being that the Bengali Muslims had been corrupted by the sinister influence of their Hindu neighbours. More important, by killing the Hindu men and driving out their families, the land and other property they left behind could be given to the Muslim middle classes in the hope of splitting the democratic movement by "buying off" sections of the Muslim Bengalis.

It soon became obvious, however, that Bengalis, whether Muslim or not, were not to be trusted in any administrative position. Bengalis have been purged from the Civil Service and police force and

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a new "Civil Defence Force", made up of West Pakistanis and Biharis, has been formed to hold down the people.

Conclusion

It seems clear that, unlike India after independence, Pakistan has never experienced the development of political democracy along bourgeois lines. There has been no series of relatively free elections, no opportunity for a Communist Party to operate legally for long periods and organise the masses. Instead, the field has been left relatively open for fanatical Islamic parties to achieve a degree of political influence over the peasantry. Thus, in comparison with India, the democratic movement in Pakistan has been less experienced and less advanced.

Even so, the movement of 1968-69 represented a great advance, though along the lines of development towards the relatively limited goal of bourgeois democracy. This movement has now been crushed with the utmost barbarity by the Pakistan army. A new phase has now been entered, in which development along parliamentary lines has been checked and the path of advance must be by armed struggle.

The Need for Unity

There can be no doubt that the democratic movement has suffered a great, though temporary, setback. The greatest need of the movement is the broadest unity in the fight of the people of Bangla Desh for an end to the military dictatorship. The Communist Party of Bangla Desh and the National Awami Party of Muzaffar Ahmed have given the call for the formation of a National Liberation Front consisting of themselves, the Awami League, the Bhashani National Awami Party and other pro-Bangla Desh leftist participating in the liberation struggle. The people of Bangla Desh have the right to expect full support from the Left, indeed all decent people everywhere. Let their leaders speak for themselves:

> The Communist Party of East Pakistan (Bangla Desh) has always been part and parcel of the world communist movement and was a signatory to the documents issued by the World Communist Conference held at Moscow in 1969. The Communist Party of East Pakistan (Bangla Desh) hopes to get the support of the world communist movement and of the fraternal parties in the liberation struggle of our motherland. It is a struggle against a ruthless and barbarous enemy armed to the teeth by the imperialists and having the support of the Maoists of China. Therefore our battle is undoubtedly a grim one. For the victory of this just liberation war of ours, the support and help of the progressive and communist forces of the world are absolutely necessary.
>
> We are expectantly looking to this support and hope that it will be forthcoming.
>
> With evolutionary greetings,
>
> ABDUS SALAM,
> Secretary, Central Committee,
> Communist Party of East Pakistan
> (Bangla Desh).
>
> May 3, 1971.

> We now appeal to the nations of the world for recognition and assistance, both material and moral, in our struggle for nationhood. Every day this is delayed, a thousand lives are lost and more of Bangla Desh's vital assets are destroyed. In the name of humanity, act now and earn our undying friendship.
>
> TAJUDDIN AHMED,
> Prime Minister of Bangla Desh
>
> April 17, 1971.

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The Economic Strategy of British Capitalism

Pat Devine[1]

". . . Britain always had a line of retreat open when the challenge of other economies became too pressing. We could retreat further into both Empire and Free Trade—into our monopoly of as yet undeveloped regions, which in itself helped to keep them unindustrialised, and into our functions as the hub of the world's trading, shipping and financial transactions. We did not have to compete but could evade." (p. 14)

" The inter-war years neither modernised the British economy nor made it internationally competitive. . . . But at least certain foundations for modernisation were laid, or rather certain major obstacles to it removed.

The reason why the inter-war catastrophe had not more fundamental consequences is threefold: the pressure on the economy was not desperate enough; the most efficient—and indeed indispensable—method of modernization, state planning, was used very sparingly, for political reasons; and virtually all economic changes initiated in this period were defensive and negative.

The pressure on the economy was inadequate, partly because the peculiar international position of Britain somewhat blunted the impact of the sharpest spur to action, the great slump of 1929-33." (p. 213)

"The British economy in the early 1960s therefore still relied largely on the forces of 'natural' and spontaneous evolution, though nudged along by public policy. It did so all the more because, after 1951, government deliberately abstained from administrative controls, except (theoretically) as short-term crisis measures. By then this state of affairs came under increasingly heavy criticism, and it was clear that much more systematic measures of planning, of rationalisation, of destroying irrationalities and inefficiencies, would soon be needed. By international standards, British performance was poor. The fundamental problem of Britain's position in the international economy had clearly not been solved. It was by no means clear that an economy of Britain's size could meet the challenge and the rivalry of the much larger super-economies such as the USA, the USSR and the European Economic Community. But it seemed reasonably certain that it had not yet found its way." (pp. 271 & 2)

(*Quotations from E. J. Hobsbawm*, Industry and Empire, *Pelican Economic History of Britain, Volume 3, 1969.*).

Necessity for a Change

This paper attempts to provide a very general outline of the crisis facing British capitalism and of the efforts of the ruling class to resolve this crisis. In summary, the argument advanced is that by the 1960s the dominant position established by British capital in the nineteenth century had at last been completely eroded. If Britain was to survive as an independent imperialist power a fundamental change of course had become unavoidable. Of course, Britain's relative position has been steadily weakening for at least a century. However, retreat into the accumulated layers of fat—a sheltered trading position, invisible service income, overseas profits, an international banking and reserve currency system—for long provided an easier, if short-sighted because increasingly temporary, way out. By the 1960s the fat had disappeared and even short-term survival was no longer to be had by backward-looking recourse to the played-out possibilities of Britain's old-style imperialist position. A funda-

[1] This paper draws very heavily on the work of Bill Warren. In particular see: "Capitalist Planning and the State" submitted to the Conference of Socialist Economists, October 1970; "Capitalist Planning and International Contradictions", *Marxism Today*, July 1970; and "The Theory of the State", *Marxism Today*, December 1967. It was first presented to a Working Conference on Britain and the EEC, May 1971, organised by the Conference of Socialist Economists.

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mental change had become necessary for short-run let alone long-run, survival.

The growing awareness of this necessity and the increasingly desperate attempts of the ruling class to come to terms with it have taken place in the context of a world capitalist system displaying marked qualitative changes in its *modus operandi* as compared with earlier periods. The competitive struggle has occurred in a period in which the forces objectively opposed to the capitalist system have been stronger than in any previous historical epoch. This has brought to the centre of analysis the tension existing between the need of the imperialist countries to co-operate in order to preserve the functioning of their world system and the antagonistic rivalry at the heart of that system.

State Policy

This situation has not only influenced the means by which inter-imperalist rivalry has been pursued but has also greatly affected the form in which class struggle has proceeded in individual capitalist countries. These two facets are linked by the key role played by the state. An analysis of state policy is centrally involved in an analysis of the strategy of British capitalism. State policy is not given, it is decided. It is not a *passive reflection* of the self-evident interests of the national capitalist class, nor of the interests of any specific section of that class. Rather, it is the outcome of an *active process*, a more or less conscious attempt to arrive at a viable course of action from the standpoint both of the preservation and strengthening of the system, nationally and on a world-scale, and of the particular interests of the dominant groupings of nationally-based capital.

This outcome will be shaped by many factors—the degree of instability of the world capitalist system, the competitive position of the British capitalist economy, conflicts of interest betweeen capital groupings based in Britain, the strength of the working class and anti-imperialist movement domestically and internationally. Inconsistencies and mistakes are to be expected, the more so the weaker is the national capitalism concerned, the more intractable its problems and the smaller the room for manoeuvre open to it. For all that, general strategies are likely to emerge and it is important to be aware of them.

Inter-Imperialist Rivalry

In the post-war period, inter-imperialist rivalry has decreasingly relied on direct military confrontation or struggle over open political control. Faced with the need for solidarity against the socialist countries and the need to prevent politically unsettling global dislocation or catastrophe, inter-imperialist antagonism has increasingly manifested itself in neo-colonial intervention (often on opposing sides) and especially in tension between the advanced capitalist powers within the industrialised sector of the capitalist world.

The trend, in the form of the liberalisation of trade and capital movements, has been towards a system in which relative position has been determined more and more directly by economic strength, through the medium of market forces. This trend has been due not only to the changed political situation in the post-war world but also to the growing internationalisation of economic life reflecting the continuing rapid socialisation of the productive forces. One aspect of this latter phenomenon has been the growing economic penetration of one another's domestic economies by the imperialist powers, so far principally by the United States. However, at the same time as direct economic competition has become more important, political intervention, state policy, has also played an increasingly important role. This has been via (i) state action to further the competitive position of the national economy, and (ii) state influence on the international framework within which market forces operate. Action to influence the international framework will not be considered at any length. Negotiations in GATT, recent talk of protective trade measures, the continual sparring over reform of the international monetary system and, of course, the whole question of regional blocs are all to be interpreted in this light.

How to Make the Change?

The change in emphasis from protectionism and direct political control over spheres of influence to more intense economic competition has placed a premium on the updating of the parasitic and distorted economies of the older-established imperial powers. The speed and ease with which the transition from an old-style imperialist economy to a modernised, efficient, competitive new-style imperialist economy is accomplished, if at all, will vary between different countries. It will depend on the balance between the stimulus for change arising from the competitive pressure of unevenly developing rivals, the resistance to change from vested interests whose position is tied up with the old-style imperialist orientation of the economy and from the working class to the extent that it is not prepared to tolerate change at its expense, and the residual possibilities offered by the old imperialist position for evading the competitive pressure by retreating further into partial monopoly and protectionism.

In the immediate post-war years there was an attempt to re-build Britain's imperialist position primarily on the basis of the traditional backward-looking orientation symbolised by the emphasis on capital export, the role of sterling and overseas military commitments, although the impressive post-

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war export performance (when compared with the experience of the previous century) should not be overlooked. The objective impossibility of this strategy was reflected in the succession of deepening balance of payments crises, culminating in the general recognition that some time in the first half of the 1960s a "fundamental disequilibrium" had set in. It has been widely argued that the policy measures adopted during the 1950s and early 1960s, conveniently designated "stop-go," merely accentuated the long-run weakness, while increasingly failing to deal adequately with even the short-term problem. Evidence of disagreement within the ruling class over the appropriateness of this policy accumulated during the latter part of this period. This disagreement has sometimes been construed as a conflict between the "reactionary" City and "progressive" industry. On the argument of this paper the conflict should rather be interpreted as a struggle between capital groupings whose particular interests were bound up with the traditional imperialist orientation of the economy and those which stood to benefit from the transition to a new-style imperialism and/or which took a longer-run view of the interests of the British imperialist economy as a whole.

The Problems of British Capitalism

Despite its temporary position in the immediate post-war years as second only to the United States, Britain was objectively in probably the weakest position of all the major capitalist powers—due to the deep-seated distortions of its economic structure, its inefficiency and lack of competitiveness, i.e., its parasitism, on the one hand, and the strength of its working class on the other. For this reason the post-war manifestation of the basic internal contradiction of capitalism, namely a persistent tendency to inflation as a mechanism to prevent working class encroachment on the share of capital in the absence of the industrial reserve army, made itself felt soonest and most strongly in Britain.

The persistence over a long period of relatively full employment (by historical standards)—due to the changed balance of world forces, the changes in the *modus operandi* of capitalist economies, the political necessity felt by the ruling class, and the newly-found technical ability of the state—altered the balance of power between workers and capital in the labour market. This enabled the working class to obtain increases in money earnings of a magnitude and over a sustained period unparalleled in history.

Given the parasitism of the British economy, its lack of dynamism and slow growth of productivity, the share of profits could only be maintained by a more rapid rate of price increase than in the other major capitalist countries. Of course, the lack of dynamism in the British economy affected British capital's competitive position not only indirectly, via price competitiveness, but also directly, by way of technical backwardness, lagging innovation and supply shortages.

The "stop-go" policies pursued during the 1950s were intended to deal with the problems of inflation and payments crises by acting on the level of demand by means of fiscal and monetary measures and were for political reasons designed, as far as possible, to a general, non-discriminatory effect.

Interventionist State Policy

As already noted, these policies in fact had adverse consequences for the underlying strength of the economy, inhibiting essential structural re-organisation and modernisation. In the first half of the 1960s the ground was laid, under the pressure of growing necessity, for a much more interventionist and discriminatory state policy. The problem of international competitiveness was to be tackled from two sides. In place of the continual, and often perverse, fluctuations in the level of demand, money wages were to be controlled by direct means, by incomes policy, thus enabling a high level of demand and activity to be maintained.

On the other hand, structural re-organisation was to be achieved and productivity increased by various forms of direct, quasi-administrative intervention. The strategy was to be held together by some form of (indicative) planning which by enabling the co-ordination of resource allocation would allow smooth and continuous economic growth. Tendencies of this general character, more or less developed, are evident *mutatis mutandis* in all developed capitalist countries, under the joint influences already referred to of the post-war changes in the political balance, the onset of generalised inflation arising out of relatively full employment, and the development of the productive forces. They have assumed their most complete form, however, in Britain because of the uniquely acute position of post-war British imperialism.

Paradoxically, it was the very acuteness of this position, together perhaps with a vestigial attachment to the trappings of past imperial grandeur reflected in the reluctance to devalue, which rendered the balance of payments crisis inevitable and frustrated the Labour government's forlorn attempt to break out of the "stop-go" cycle. This background of the predictable failure of the strategy attempted by the ruling class in the mid-1960s—the Conservative Party and the CBI as well as Labour moved in this direction—together with the essentially bi-partisan policy pursued since then, must form the basis of any analysis of present ruling class strategy.

The Essential Dilemma

The failure of the Labour government's attempt at an expansion-led change to a new course brought

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about much greater clarity on the essential dilemma. Structural re-organisation and modernisation to bring about an increased underlying rate of productivity growth and greater competitiveness can most easily be achieved in a situation of high demand and rapid growth, since in this way the social consequences and political repercussions can be mollified. But a high level of demand and rapid growth over any sustained period before extensive rationalisation and productivity increase have been achieved inevitably give rise to balance of payments problems. It was this consideration that caused the Labour government to place increasing stress on the payments position.

The policy adopted was to combine the direct measure of incomes policy and a rising level of unemployment, brought about by fiscal and monetary measures in order to hold down the increase in money wages. Devaluation brought about a temporary gain in price competitiveness and together with the increase in indirect taxation contributed to the rise in prices which provided an additional restraint on the increase in real income. Thus, there was instituted a period of relative stagnation, during which a turnaround in the balance of payments position was achieved, in effect at the expense of the rate of growth of working class real income. Rapidly increasing prices helped to produce, after a lag, a vigorous wages counter-offensive which in 1970 succeeded in increasing substantially the rate of growth of real income, thus reversing the trend of the previous five years.

Wages and the Crisis

This wages offensive can be analysed using the concept of the moral and historical element in the value of labour power. Insofar as post-war experience has caused expectations of increased real living standards to become built-in to the moral and historical element, the frustration of these expectations will result in real wages falling below the value of labour power. Hence, the conditions will exist for the development of a counter-offensive by the working class, within the possibilities of the prevailing balance of power. That the years when real income rose more slowly than in the period which gave rise to working class expectations were also years in which, due to the prolonged period of relative stagnation, the share of profits fell, does not invalidate the analysis. Within working class consciousness there will be expectations about rising real standards as well as ideas about distribution.

It is a measure of the gravity of the present crisis facing the British ruling class that an unusually determined campaign is underway to defeat the current wages offensive and bring about a fairly basic shift in the balance of power. Unemployment for the past four years has been well above the average for the post-war period and has now reached a new peak. It is being used explicitly as a weapon to curb wage increases. "I must say bluntly that the extent to which a responsible government can take expansionary measures is strictly limited at a time when it is imperative, in the interests of all of us, that the pace of inflation should be damped down." (A. Barber, quoted in *The Times*, 22/4/71.)

The present implicit incomes policy of "de-escalation", n–1 per cent, represents direct administrative pressure in the public sector and indirect pressure in the private. The Industrial Relations Bill is calculated to bring about a change in the overall context, in the legal framework and social climate, in which the class struggle is conducted. That these policies reflect the gravity of the situation of British capital may be gauged from the way in which they have heightened working class militancy, contributed to changes in policy in the Trade Union movement and greatly sharpened awareness of the class basis of society. The way in which the unfolding confrontation is resolved will have far-reaching effects on the room for manoeuvre of the ruling class.

Labour's Attempt at Updating

Although the payments position and the attempt to deal with it at the expense of increases in working class living standards became the central preoccupation of the Labour government, the underlying problem of updating the economy was not abandoned. Specific acts of state-sponsored reorganisation in the private sector were undertaken. Steel was nationalised. But in addition to these largely defensive measures the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation was established with a generalised capacity for inducing structual change and the ability to provide financial assistance. Mergers were encouraged with an emphasis on developing giant firms with an international orientation and high technology firms (often but not always the same firms) able to compete effectively. The work of the little Neddies and the rapid development of the Business Schools and business courses in general can be seen as attempts to increase the effectiveness with which British capital was deployed in the competitive struggle. Lastly, the near-obsession of the Prices and Incomes Board with productivity, its promotion of productivity deals (notwithstanding the considerable proportion of phoney deals manufactured as justification for pay increases) and its general popularisation of new techniques for the integration of shop-floor workers into a more formalised structure subject to greater managerial control, can be seen to conform to the dual objective of overcoming the backwardness of many sections of the economy and establishing firmer control over the labour force.

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New International Alignment

The process of transformation from an old- to a new-style imperialist economy involves not only domestic restructuring and generally increasing competitiveness, it also involves a new international alignment. For a variety of reasons the most rapidly expanding sector of world trade and capital has become the industrialised capitalist sector. It was towards this sector that British capital needed to orient itself. Once again, the 1960s can be seen clearly as a watershed. It is not only Marxists who have been aware of this.

> "In the 'sixties Britain needed to gear its economy to those of the other advanced industrial countries instead of the Commonwealth. Although the process of decolonisation had been going on through the 'fifties, it was not completed until the decade was over and when Selwyn Lloyd announced the intention of setting up NEDC in 1961 very little of the consequential adjustments had been made. Our overseas investment and trade was still predominantly directed to the Commonwealth. Our money markets were open to them and our imperial defence network was the same as when it was largely paid out of the budgets of the colonies."
>
> (F. Catherwood, "Why Neddy Survived", *Lloyds Bank Review*, April 1971.)

It was not inevitable that the need for a new international alignment would take the form of seeking entry into the EEC. Indeed, initially the attempt was made to prevent the establishment of the EEC in favour of some more broadly based free trade area—a North Atlantic Free Trade Area still has its adherents—and when that attempt failed EFTA was set up as a makeshift bargaining counter. In fact, however, in the course of the 1960s the dominant sections of British capital moved strongly in favour of seeking entry into the Common Market, despite the fact that failure to get in at the beginning (partly due to the backward-looking perspectives still prevalent at that time) carried with it a fairly stiff penalty in the form of the recently negotiated entry terms.

Common Market

Apart from the global political significance of the EEC as a potential bulwark against socialism in a divided Europe, there are several possible general reasons why the key sections of the ruling class might want to join. Membership of the EEC would presumably facilitate the development of alliances between British and the other national capitals, both in the competitive struggle against US and Japanese capital and in the pursuit of neo-colonial activities. Such alliances would be able to make use of the Community's ability to practise collective discrimination against third parties and in general to bring to bear greater strength in bargaining over the framework within which international competition is carried out. In addition, other state functions, at a time of rapidly increasing internationalisation of economic life, are likely to be more efficiently performed if undertaken on a larger scale. Of course, these considerations do not necessarily imply the development of new, supra-national, state institutions as opposed to the specific and possibly temporary co-operation and alliance of national states on some issues and simultaneous competition and conflict on others.

If supra-national development is to take place, and there seems to be no reason in principle why it should not, it would presumably be based on the growing centralisation of what are at present still essentially national capitals into some sort of "European" capital. Although references to "European" capital have been made in the context of discussions on the international firm, it is not clear what is intended by this in present circumstances, unless it is merely shorthand for alliances of European national capitals. Neither the frequency of trans-national mergers between firms in Europe nor the extent of intra-European direct investment by such firms (most trans-national mergers and direct investment have so far involved American firms) seem to require the use of the category "European capital" for their analysis. In any case, this approach may be more fundamentally misguided in that it emphasises one-sidedly the atomised character of individual capitals at the expense of the concept of British, French, German, etc. capital as distinct socio-economic and political blocs.

The Present Position

Two further probable consequences of entry seem likely to be advantageous. To the extent that competitive pressure is intensified as a result of entry, the survival of only the fittest will be speeded up. If any British firms survive, they are likely to be the giants, those constituting the dominant groupings of British monopoly capital. Political opposition to this further centralisation of capital may well be more manageable within a larger economic unit. It can be argued that even if national monopolies are created they will be engaged in competition with other giants within the Community, while the social consequences stemming from concentration can be presented as the unavoidable results of the operation of the market. Indeed, one of the major advantages of membership of the EEC for the ruling class may be the possibilities it offers for relative insulation from the pressure of the national working class movements, exercised via direct industrial action or indirectly via policies forced on their national capitalist states.

The threads of the analysis can now be pulled

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together. The failure of the first post-war strategy of seeking to re-establish an old-style imperialist position gave rise to the realisation that a new course was needed. The short-lived attempt to move on to a new course by means of expansion, incomes policy and indicative planning inevitably failed. In its place there was mounted a determined effort to improve the balance of payments by holding down the level of activity and living standards. To an extent this succeeded but it produced the current wages offensive and the new phenomenon of "stagflation". Simultaneously, attempts were being made to restructure industry and to improve efficiency by means of the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation and the general emphasis on productivity. Recognition of the need for a new international alignment resulted in a series of bids for entry into the EEC.

This is the present position facing the Conservative government. Its basic dilemma is that any significant increase in the rate of growth, a desirable condition for continuing the process of updating the economy, is likely to lead to renewed payments problems. The situation is rendered more acute by the fact that during the lengthy period of stagnation the holding down of working class living standards has gone hand in hand, paradoxically, with an increase in the share of earned income at the expense of profits. Hence, a desperate attempt is underway to effect a basic change in the balance of class power, using unemployment, administrative measures in the public sector and the Industrial Relations Bill. In part the attempt, together with the haggling over entry conditions, is to enable British capital to start off on the right foot in the EEC, for the benefits to be derived are obviously dependent on its ability to compete.

> ". . . perhaps the biggest contribution made in Neddy discussions has been the point that we can enjoy the benefits of trade liberalisation only if British industry is in a position to compete on equal terms. And so the price of failure to maintain a competitive industry is not that we would be forced into a second devaluation—which would solve nothing—but that we would be forced to put up the shutters as a trading nation, with all that that would imply for our standard of living and rate of economic growth." (Catherwood, *op.cit.*)

Entry into the EEC is seen as a way of developing the momentum to complete the transformation to a new-style, efficient and competitive, imperialist economy based on a new international alignment.

Long-Term Objective

This transformation is the basic long-term objective of the ruling class. To further its realisation the current emphasis is on the fundamental weakening of the working class movement and entry into the Common Market. Failure to get into the EEC would represent a defeat and cause a reappraisal of the methods to be adopted but would not imply any change in the basic long-term objective. Failure to win the current trial of strength with the working class over wages and the Industrial Relations Bill would, if anything, be more serious. It would amount to a partial loss of control and, hence, hard-headed use of unemployment (despite its political dangers), the incitement of public hysteria and possibly some type of formal incomes policy or freeze are to be expected. In the longer-run, however, inside or outside the EEC, there will have to be a return to the policy of seeking to integrate the working class voluntarily into a system of managed capitalism, planned to yield steady increases in real wages in exchange for the surrender of the power of independent action. To quote Catherwood again:

> "It is interesting to note that the famous report of the OECD Working Party No. 2—*The Outlook for Economic Growth*, May 1970—looking at the problem of the major industrial countries in the free world, emphasises the need in all of them for the kinds of economic planning put forward . . . in the NEDC Orange Book of 1963 (*Conditions Favourable to Faster Growth)*: the steady growth of demand, active manpower policies, regional policies, policies to foster competition and policies for incomes."

Working-Class Strategy

Finally, a few remarks on conclusions for working class strategy. Immediately, the wages offensive and the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill are paramount. In addition, there is an urgent need to develop the campaign against entry into the Common Market. Of both immediate and longer-term importance is the task of elaborating a policy towards mergers, rationalisation and closures. To the extent that the analysis of this paper is well-founded these will continue, indeed may well accelerate, and redundancies will result. Clearly, there is no alternative to opposing modernisation at the expense of the working class; but this opposition must be conducted in a way which does not deny the need for change. (An analogous point can be made about the argument that more exports are needed.)

The major long-term implication of the analysis is that in or out of the Common Market there needs to be developed an orientation towards offensive struggle around the nature of state intervention in and management of the economy, the extent of which is expected to increase. Such struggle must be based on the elaboration of the main lines of an alternative perspective for the development of the productive forces in Britain and for Britain's place in the world. It will require

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a high level of theoretical awareness and needs to have as its focus the mobilisation of the working class movement around the demand for democratic planning—a demand which, if taken seriously, can only lead in a revolutionary direction.

On the Personality of Lenin

Gyorgy Lukacs

The following text is extracted from a television interview first given by György Lukács to Adrás Kovács a few months before his death. Part of it was televised before his death but on June 10 it was printed for the first time by Népszabadsag. *András Kovács is one of Hungary's foremost young film directors.*

Q. Did you have any personal contact with Lenin?

A. My only contact with Lenin was at the Third Congress of the Communist International when I was introduced to him as a delegate of the Hungarian Party. This happened in 1921 when a fierce battle was on against sectarian trends evolving within the Comintern. Since I myself belonged to a sectarian group at the time, Lenin had an unfavourable opinion of me, as he generally had about sectarians. It does not even enter my mind to compare my role with that of Bordigha who represented sectarianism in the great Italian Party. Naturally, Lenin did not ascribe such importance to any functionary of the illegal Hungarian Party.

One particular incident was in question: I had taken a stand in the Vienna periodical *Communism* against Communist participation in Parliament, and Lenin in passing referred in an article to the fact that I had published a very radical and rather non-Marxist type of article on the subject. For me this was instructive because Lenin's book *Left Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder* was published about the same time as the article. In this he dealt with the question of parliamentarianism in detail arguing that, in the context of world history, parliamentarianism was an antiquated stage of development but this does not mean that parliamentarianism could be ignored tactically.

Going back to how I got to know Lenin, once, during an interval between meetings I was introduced to Lenin and then we exchanged a few cordialities. One must not forget that several hundred people took part in the Congress and Lenin was interested in 20-30 people, so you must take it that Lenin showed the customary cordiality to a delegate and nothing more. This was the extent of the personal contact between Lenin and myself.

It is another question that I, as a delegate, had the chance of observing Lenin. In this respect perhaps I may be allowed to tell a brief story which is very instructive. At that time the presidium was not such a great thing, there was no protocol, nor a large stage, where the members of the presidium sat, just a simple conference hall with some sort of platform, the kind which is common in universities or secondary schools for the lecturer. On it there was a bench, a table with four or five people sitting around it who in fact presided over the particular meeting. Once, as Lenin entered, some members of the presidium wanted to get up to make room for him at the table. Lenin signalled to them to stay put, sat on the step of the platform, took his notebook out and started making notes of what the speakers said. And up to the end of the meeting he sat there on the step. I think this is very characteristic of Lenin's personality.

Q. When did you first hear of Lenin in fact?

A. Very late. One must not forget, before the dictatorship[1] I did not take part in the working class movement, I was never a member of the Social Democratic Party. In December 1918 it was the Communist Party I joined—the first party I ever joined.

Q. Were you a foundation member?

A. No, no, no . . . I joined about four weeks after

[1] This refers to the dictatorship of the proletariat—the Hungarian Republic of Councils of 1919.

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its formation. Though I was not a socialist, but naturally, broadly speaking, I knew the German, French and English theoreticians. I had read Kautsky and Mehring but mainly I had studied Sorel as Ervin Szabo[2] had drawn my attention to him. We knew nothing about the Russian working class movement, at the utmost we only knew some of the works of Plekhanov. Lenin's name began to mean something to me when I read in the papers about the role of Lenin in 1917. I only learnt about Lenin's real significance in emigration in Vienna.

Q. What was it that most affected you, as one of his contemporaries, in Lenin's attitude?

A. The fact that I got acquainted with a thoroughly new type of a revolutionary. At the time of the transfer of power many in the working class movement, naturally, changed sides from right to left, taking with them all the right wing characteristics through which they had adapted themselves previously to bourgeois society. I was disinterested in that type. But I was interested in and I stood close intellectually to a certain ascetic type of revolutionary who had first risen at the time of the French Revolution around Robespierre in Jacobinism. This type was described most precisely by Max Levine who was executed in Munich and who said: "we communists are corpses on leave". This type had eminent examples in Hungary. I do not want to give a whole list here but I do want to mention the name of Ottó Korvin who was a type of ascetic revolutionary[3]. Contrary to both types Lenin represented something entirely new. He was a man who flung himself wholeheartedly into revolution. One could even say he lived exclusively for the revolution. However, he was far from being ascetic. He was the type of man who was for life with all its contradictions, one might even say he enjoyed it. He was a man who acted as objectively as if he were an ascetic but without even the slightest trace of asceticism in him. And gradually as I pieced together the picture of his personality, I have come to see that he was the great human type of a socialist revolutionary.

It was Lenin who, for the first time, since Marx, seriously raised the significance of the subjective factors in revolution. His definition of a revolutionary situation, when the ruling classes are no longer able to govern in the old sense, and the oppressed classes are no longer willing to live in the old way, is generally known. When his followers adopted this concept, some made a "slight" difference in interpretation, saying that "not to want to live in the old way" meant for them that economic development is automatically turning people into revolutionaries. Lenin knew that the problem of "not wanting to live in the old way" has strong dialectical implications and is a manifold tendency of society.

Allow me to illustrate this with a very important example. At the time of the disputes around the 1917 October Revolution, Zinoviev, in one of his articles, wrote amongst other things that there was no truly revolutionary situation because in the suppressed masses there were very strong reactionary trends, and some sections even belonged to the "black hundreds", Russia's ultra-reactionaries. Lenin, with his customary sharpness, rejected Zinoviev's evaluation. The basis of his train of thoughts can be summarised as follows: if the great crisis of society occurs, that is to say people do not want to live in the old way any longer, this unwillingness can manifest itself, what is more must manifest itself, in a revolutionary and a reactionary way. Here, the subjective factor, to a certain degree is squared[4] and the Party's task is precisely to bring influence to bear on the possibilities offered by the subjective factors under these circumstances.

Lenin preferred a forward pointing and at the same time extremely realistic definition of the social situation. It is no accident that Lenin did not, in any way, accept the anarchist conception that the prerequisite of revolution was individual man's passage from capitalist egoism to socialist co-operation. Lenin always said: socialist revolution had to be realised with men given to us by capitalism and who, in many respects have been spoilt by capitalism. That is to say, Lenin had the type of realism that brings social necessity into harmony with actions of people who differ from individual to individual. And from this realistic harmony he endeavoured to define the current tasks of revolution in such a way that the task should be a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. In this concrete analysis the analysis of man is also included.

Q. Does this dialectic also apply to the individual?

A. Lenin found Bukharin's personality most attractive and emphasised his deserved popularity within the party. At the same time in what we used to call Lenin's testament, he explained that Bukharin had never been a true Marxist. Lenin also clearly saw the impossibility of always acting legally and justly under circumstances of civil war. With his characteristic consistency he said once to Gorky, who had complained to him on this subject, that he should picture to himself a brawl

[2] The first scientific Marxist in Hungary.

[3] A foundation member of the Hungarian Communist Party, arrested, tortured and executed after the defeat of the Republic of Councils.

[4] Translator's note—"raised to the second power".

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in a tavern. Who can say which of the many blows were necessary and which were superfluous from the point of view of the fighters? He added—it is extremely important that the leader of an organisation fighting against counter-revolution (Dzerzhinsky) should have a flair for assessing facts and justice. That is, totality always manifests itself in intricate, dialectic many-sidedness whether it be a major political decision or the assessment of an individual person which is at stake.

György Lukács quoted the relationship between Lenin and Gorky as another example. He said: "Lenin thought very highly of Gorky's talents but, as can be seen from his letters, he sharply condemned Gorky when he took the wrong road. The concept that there were completely perfect and completely defective people was completely alien to Lenin. In his book on Leftism he says very clearly that flawless people, people who act flawlessly do not exist. The wise people are those who do not commit very vital mistakes and who put their mistakes right as soon as possible, writes Lenin. Here it is also clearly evident how much Lenin saw live dialectics in individuals. Lenin demanded a concrete analysis of the concrete situation and this manifested itself also in human and political terms in his relationship with people whom he deemed to be important".

Discussion Contributions on:

The Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

Harry Challis

It has been my view for a number of years that *The British Road to Socialism* is an empirical document tricked out by a few shreds of theory that are presented as being so self-evident as to need no deeper analysis. Once satisfied that Marx expressed a view with which it would not be inconsistent, there seemed little else for us to do but get on with the job and reshape the document in the light of experience.

The arguments for the *British Road* have been grafted on to an existing body of theory with an astonishing absence of self-criticism. The whole process has been completely without intellectual rigour and if the theory and practice of the British Communist Party could be represented as a book, then the *British Road* has simply added another chapter without disturbing in any way the perspective of the earlier ones.

Three years ago in the Crawley Branch Bulletin I noted that: "Many comrades regard the *British Road* as an astute bit of window dressing—welcome insofar as it makes us more acceptable electorally". Bert Pearce makes a similar observation. He does not, unfortunately, draw attention to the consequent and much more serious fact that we have failed to develop or attract a cadre force with the conviction and will to put in the necessary work on the electoral front to get our programme off the ground. This is the price of treating the theoretical basis of our programme superficially.

World Relation of Forces

One cannot escape the suspicion that we have been inhibited in our earnestness in this direction by a reluctance to expose the validity of our previous practice to serious examination. This has led to the *sine qua non* of our programme being the curious argument that the changed balance of class forces in the world now—that is, definitely not before 1951—makes the concept an emergent possibility. It would indeed be strange if the changed balance of class forces in the world did not make some difference to the prospects for world socialism. But its relevance to the manner in which it can be reached in Britain is not so apparent as it is stated.

Clearly the existence of a powerful group of socialist states increases the chances of a new one surviving because they can offer fraternal help

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in terms of material support and discourage intervention by hostile capitalist powers. No one doubts, for example, that but for the existence of the Soviet Union, Cuba would soon have succumbed to gunboat diplomacy. But Cuba made it by violent revolution.

Certainly the existence of the Soviet Union has not stopped the Americans preventing socialism coming to South Vietnam, although this would have come precisely through peaceful means in a general election which the Imperialists admitted would be won by the forces of socialism.

Having strong socialist friends raises the chances of the overthrow of capitalism being successful. But it seems to have no obvious bearing on how this overthrow comes about.

Where the fault in the argument lies appears to me to be in how we regard the "changed balance of world class forces". We tend to see the struggle between the socialist states and the capitalist states as a simple case of the internal class struggle in individual countries writ large. Any change on a world scale reflects itself internally. Its corollary is that support for the socialist states of the world is a *simple* case of class solidarity, like supporting the electricity power workers whether their actions are popular or not. All this is political reductionism of the crudest kind.

It would indeed be a valuable task to study just what difference the existence of the socialist states does make to the prospects of achieving socialism in capitalist states. Undoubtedly it would have to appear as a balance sheet in which the negative would have to be recognised with the positive. On the positive side would be the opportunity for communist parties in capitalist states to develop their vision in the process of a frank assessment of how socialism makes out where it is being tried. Unfortunately we seem reluctant to strike this balance sheet and this itself handicaps an imaginative development of our own vision of a future socialist Britain.

The Empirical Case

Nevertheless the empirical case for the *British Road* remains a powerful one. It has a ring of realism about it that renders the majority of Party members doggedly impervious to the arguments of its critics. An example is the programme's summary rejection by the Chinese Party which seems overly impressed by two maxims. First, the cautionary observation of Marx that no ruling class has yet abdicated its power without an armed struggle; and second, that the adjustment of the superstructure to the economic base is a historically catalysmic event identical with the "qualitative leaps" that are an allegedly universal concomittant of all changes of quality in the natural world.

They compound their philosophical dogmatism with the logical felony of rejecting the possibility of a non-violent transition to socialism in the future, because it has not, so far, been achieved that way. They are indifferent to the fact that no bourgeois democratic state has ever advanced to socialism through an armed uprising either.

We have more easily shaken off the conviction that history has a built-in "principle" that determines specific possibilities in advance. Marxism is a methodology, not a metaphysic.

But the Chinese Communists are right to refer back to first principles even though the ones they appeal to are a trifle arbitrary.

What seems to me, in this connection, to be elementary, is that as well as elaborating our case for what is new in British circumstances, we should scrutinise afresh what has not changed. Traditional democratic institutions to which we now attach such decisive importance pre-date the birth of the *British Road* by at least half a century. Yet we have

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no serious Marxist study of, for example, the evolution and potentialities of the organs of British local government.

A more important neglected priority would surely be to examine our traditional analysis of the primary relationship between our capitalist and working classes to see if there are any too glib assumptions in our previous concepts that might have blinded us to real possibilities in the past. I suspect that we have shied away from this line of investigation to avoid giving grist to the mills of our critics on the left who accuse us of all manner of revisionist heresy. But in so doing we have robbed our programme of a start-to-finish coherence.

Bourgeoisie and Working Class

To conclude, therefore, I would like to look briefly at this aspect of the matter.

Marx found that the key to the understanding of history lay in development of the forces of production and the way in which social classes are related to these forces and to each other. Revolutionary classes are those on whom the development of more advanced means of production depends. In the genesis of capitalism, bourgeois relations of production and instruments of production had been developing for a long time within the framework of feudalism, before the nascent bourgeoisie seized power and destroyed feudal social relations systematically.

Socialist revolution is different, in that the social relations of production that it inaugurates cannot begin to develop within a capitalist framework. And, as the relationship of the working class to the means of production precludes it from initiating their development, the historical role of this class as the agency of social progress must express itself in some other way.

To look at this from a different angle, one notes that the sense in which the revolutionary bourgeoisie experienced feudal social relations as a "fetter" on the development of the means of production, does not apply to the working class vis-a-vis capitalist social relations, in the same direct and challenging way.

To the nascent bourgeoisie, feudalism was completely dysfunctional.

And the worker stands in relation to the capitalist as the serf to his overlord, not as the revolutionary bourgeois to the feudal landowner.

Which leads to a conclusion, noted by Lenin and others, that the working class is not a spontaneously revolutionary class. Its direct class interest lies in strengthening its bargaining power against the capitalists and taking what political steps are necessary to see that it is able to do this as effectively as possible.

Given therefore historical circumstances in which the bourgeoisie could develop into a challenge to feudal social relations, this challenge could *only* take a revolutionary form because the interests of the two classes are incompatible in that they cannot develop together.

Capitalism and the Workers

When we say that the workers constitute a revolutionary class we mean that under capitalism it is only they who have the power and the incentive to replace the system by one capable of developing the means of production without creating another exploited class. But this incentive is latent and its emergence is conditional on the social failure of the system.

Feudal-bourgeois class interests were mutually exclusive but those of the capitalists and the workers are by no means absolutely irreconcilable. Capitalism does not constitute a system of social relations independent of the working class. It can only fulfill its needs with and through the working class, which by its organisation can limit its capacity for exploitation and its social objectives.

When the capitalist class threatens the existence of this possibility it converts a spontaneous antagonism into the need for a revolutionary rejection.

This happens when capitalism fails to develop or use the means of production and its actions threaten the class freedom and expectations of its working class. In so doing it cripples its own capacity to prevent the growth of revolutionary consciousness in the workers, who in their own terms begin to see the system exposed as a "fetter" on the development of the means of production.

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Marx analysed the generating mechanism which accounted for the evolution of capitalism as an economic system. He could not be expected to predict the economic effect of social pressures on that system.

Form of the Struggle

In the circumstances of the genesis of capitalism in Britain the ruling class inherited an inability ever to be able to act with absolute freedom. And in the conditions of its growth, the class on which it is dependent has exerted a constant resistance and maintained a latent revolutionary threat that has become manifest often enough to leave no doubt of its existence.

Under these pressures capitalism has developed the productive forces of which it is capable and the political institutions on which its stability has depended.

In the two centuries of this development it is not surprising that the system has become "flexible" and its tacticians "cunning". And it is also not surprising that the working class has built the means of improving its conditions and of asserting its class needs.

Where a high level of peaceful struggle has become the norm over generations, it presumes a strength and confidence to hold a position of relative parity and a deeply rooted conviction that worthwhile achievements are possible through the exercise of existing rights.

It presumes a continuing class judgement of how tolerable is the price that has to be paid for what benefits can be won from the system.

As experience is accumulated and expressed in enduring institutions—political parties and trade unions—the case that one would need to establish as exceptional is that of the violent overthrow of the system. In fact, to argue for a violent confrontation totally contrary to the experience of the overwhelming mass of the working class would be odd in such conditions. And this is how the majority of workers do indeed regard such a counsel.

The only grounds on which, despite such a history and such a class relationship, one would still call for a non-peaceful revolution would be if history were pre-determined in the manner that the Chinese Party and others appear to think it is.

My comment is, therefore, that there are strong substantive arguments for the *British Road* that the contingent ones so far adduced, at best, simply reinforce.

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